What is polydrug use?

Polydrug use is when a person uses more than one type of drug, either at the same time or at different times.

Polydrug use occurs when a person:

- uses two or more drugs in combination
- uses one drug to counteract the effects (or the after effects) of another
- uses different drugs at different times over a short period of days or weeks.

Polydrug use can include alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, and petrol, paint and other inhalants. It does not generally include tobacco and/or coffee, however it may include combining alcohol with energy drinks.

Most people who use illegal drugs report that they have also used other drugs or alcohol as well. Because alcohol is the most widely abused psychoactive drug, it is also the most commonly involved in risky polydrug use.

What are the dangers of polydrug use?

Further reading

- Polydrug use factsheet [2] - NDARC

Using a single psychoactive drug can be dangerous; using more than one significantly increases the risks. In particular, if two drugs of the same type, such as the depressants heroin and alcohol, are used together, there are greatly increased risks of accidents, overdose and death.

Other common dangerous drug combinations include cannabis with alcohol, ecstasy with alcohol, heroin with sedatives, and amphetamines with sedatives.


Links