RECREATIONAL DRUGS AND ILLICIT & PROHIBITED DRUGS
What is a drug?

A drug is a substance, other than food, which is taken to change the way the body and/or mind function. Recreational use means a person has chosen to use a drug to deliberately alter their mood. Recreational and illicit drugs can be classed as depressants, stimulants or hallucinogens.

Some drugs are legal, such as alcohol, caffeine, nicotine and prescribed and over-the-counter medications and there are laws that regulate their availability, quality and price. Other drugs such as cannabis, amphetamines, ecstasy, cocaine and heroin, are illegal – this means they cannot be subject to quality or price controls and a person can never be sure of the strength or actual content.

Prolonged drug use can lead to tolerance (requiring increased amounts of the drug to get the same effect) and/or dependence. Dependence on a drug can be physical, psychological, or both. All drugs have the potential to cause harm.
Depressants

These include alcohol, benzodiazepines (minor tranquillizers), cannabis, gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB), heroin, morphine, codeine, methadone, and some inhalants. Depressants do not necessarily make a person feel depressed. They affect the central nervous system, slowing down the messages between the brain and the body. They can affect concentration and coordination. They slow down the person’s ability to respond to unexpected situations. In small doses they can cause a person to feel more relaxed and less inhibited. In larger doses they can cause drowsiness, vomiting, unconsciousness and death.

The short-term effects of using depressants may include:

- sleepiness
- confusion
- loss of coordination
- blurred vision
- inability to speak
- fever
- nausea and vomiting
- increased blood pressure and heart rate
- memory loss
- nose bleeds
- unpleasant taste
- decreased response to pain
**Stimulants**

These include ephedrine, amphetamines, cocaine and ecstasy. Stimulant drugs speed up the messages between the brain and the body. The can make a person feel more awake, alert, confident or energetic. Large doses of stimulants can cause over-stimulation, causing anxiety, panic, seizures, headaches, stomach cramps, aggression and paranoia.

The short-term effects of using stimulants may include:
- euphoria and a sense of wellbeing
- increased alertness, energy and hyperactivity
- talkativeness
- reduced appetite
- improved concentration
- dry mouth and a metallic taste in the mouth
- increased blood pressure and heart rate
- nausea

**Hallucinogens**

These include ketamine, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), datura, magic mushrooms (psilocybin) and mescaline (peyote cactus). Cannabis and ecstasy can also have hallucinogenic qualities. Hallucinogens distort a person’s perception of reality. People who have taken them may imagine they see, hear, smell, feel or taste things that aren’t really there, or what they see may be distorted. The effects of different hallucinogens vary. In the days following use of hallucinogens, people may experience anxiety, depression or panic attacks.

The short-term effects of using hallucinogens may include:
- feeling happy and relaxed
- seeing and hearing things that aren’t there
- confusion and trouble concentrating
- dizziness
- blurred vision
- clumsiness
- fast or irregular heart beat
- breathing quickly
- nausea and/or vomiting
- sweating and chills
- numbness
- reduced appetite
Drugs and the ADF

The ADF has a zero tolerance policy on the use of illicit drugs by its members. This means that any member found to be using illicit drugs will be required to ‘show cause’ why they should be permitted to remain in the ADF.

The ADF conducts random drug testing of ADF members. Some of the drugs included within the illicit drugs category remain detectable in urine for some time after use, so a person could return a positive test days after they have used a drug.

What are the harms associated with recreational drug use?

Due to the number and variety of recreational drugs, it is not possible to list here the specific effects of each particular drug. It should also be noted that these drugs are untested and unregulated so the quality and purity of these drugs vary greatly which leads to greater risks.
Where to seek help

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support. You can also contact your local on base Health Centre, Mental Health Professional, Chaplain or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day for immediate assistance and referrals.

The ADF Mental Health All Hours Support Line (ASL) is a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families available 24/7 on 1800 628 036 or if calling from overseas +61 2 9425 3878.

If you are away from base, or for out-of-hours assistance, you can call 1800 IMSICK to locate the nearest support.

Chaplains are connected to all units in Australia and can provide support and appropriate referrals.


The Portal is an online health information resource tool for all current and ex-serving ADF Members and their families.

Other Resources

Defence Family Helpline (1800 624 608)

The Defence Family Helpline is your first point of call for support, information and connection with your community. The Helpline is available 24/7 for ADF members and their families, and is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.

You can also email the Helpline on DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au and receive a response within 24 hours.

Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS). This 24 hour service is available to veterans of all deployments and their families on 1800 011 046.

www.therightmix.gov.au
www.drinkingchoices.gov.au