

Exercise 2

Thank you for calling our information helpline. We're here for you 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In this message you'll hear about the three most common drugs in use in Britain today – alcohol, tobacco and cannabis. You'll get some facts about risks, and if you're concerned about yourself or someone you know, you can get more details and help on our website or by calling our staffed and totally confidential hotline.

Exercise 3

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First, alcohol. Many adults like to have a drink. They say it relaxes them. But alcohol will often exaggerate whatever mood you're in when you start drinking so you can't always tell what's going to happen. One drink too many can leave you feeling out of control – people who are drunk often end up slurring their words, losing their balance and vomiting. And they probably won't feel too good the next day either.

Psychological and physical dependence on alcohol can creep up on you. It can do your head and body in. It can make you mouthy, argumentative and aggressive. Serious overindulgence can lead to alcohol poisoning, which could put you in a coma or even kill you. Long-term excessive use of alcohol causes illnesses such as liver damage, stomach cancer and heart disease.

Buying alcohol is illegal for under-18s, but last year nearly thirty thousand young people in Britain under 18 years old were admitted to hospital for alcohol-related conditions. Under-age drinkers get through the equivalent of seven million pints of beer each week with an estimated 630,000 11- to 17-year-olds drinking two or more times per week. More than one in three young adults go out drinking with the specific intention of getting drunk.

Now, tobacco. The World Health Organisation says that every eight seconds someone dies from a tobacco-related illness. Tobacco costs lives and money. Smoking 20 cigarettes a day for five years will cost around £8,000. Tobacco smoke contains over 4000 chemicals, many of which are known to do nasty things to the human body including causing cancer. It's estimated smoking contributes to 120,000 premature deaths in the UK every year. Nicotine – the main drug in cigarettes – is highly addictive. Smokers can get hooked very quickly and it can take years and a huge effort to kick the habit. The best advice we can give is don't start smoking. And if you do already smoke, the sooner you can quit, the better it will be for your health.

Finally, cannabis. Cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug in Britain today. More than 3 million people use it to give them what they might describe as a relaxed, chilled-out feeling. It's also a mild hallucinogen, meaning you may experience a state where you see objects and reality in a distorted way. The main active compound in cannabis is tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, and these days the skunk variety is much more powerful – with maybe 4 times more THC than was found in cannabis 30 years ago. The regular use of cannabis is associated with an increase in the risk of later-developing psychotic illnesses including schizophrenia. You also have to remember that as it's illegal – cannabis has been categorised as a Class B drug – you're not allowed to have it, give it away or sell it. Possession of cannabis can get you a five-year prison sentence. Supplying someone else, including your friends, can get you fourteen years and an unlimited fine. If you're caught with cannabis in your possession, the police will almost certainly take action.

Remember: if you or someone you know has a problem and needs help, please call us on our hotline for friendly, confidential and practical advice. The phone number can be found on our website. Thanks for calling.