

Drug Terms Mainstream:

There are a huge range of terms that are used in medical settings, within the drugs field and with varying degrees of accuracy in the media. The following list is not comprehensive, and seeks only to clarify some of the more common terms that are likely to be encountered.

A:

Abstinence: *not using a drug, usually one that had previously been used problematically. Not all drug treatment methods work towards abstinence.*

Abuse: *The term drug-abuse is a social, legal and medical construction; legally, the use of any illegal drug could be construed as drug-abuse. Medically, the use of medicines in a non-prescribed manner would be drug-abuse. And socially, using certain drugs that are not accepted by wider society, or using in a fashion that is not condoned by society is drug abuse. Thus, drinking alcohol in moderation in certain settings is not considered drug abuse, while drinking a bottle of spirits a night is; the taking of Valium prescribed by your doctor is drug not abuse, and taking the same pills if given by a friend is. Because of the value-laden nature of the term, many people talk about drug-use rather than abuse.*

Addictive; Addiction; Addict; Addictive Personality: *These terms cause much confusion. The term 'dependency' is preferred. However, some sources still use these terms. The World Health Organisation defined drug addiction as: a state of periodic or chronic intoxication, detrimental to the individual and to society, produced by repeated consumption of a drug (natural or synthetic). Its characteristics include: 1: an overpowering desire or need (compulsion) to continue taking the drug and to obtain it by any means; 2: a tendency to increase the dose; and 3: a psychic (psychological) and sometimes physical dependence on the effects of the drug. [World Health Organisation 1950] Within this definition some drugs (e.g. heroin) are physically addictive, and there is a potential for most other drugs for psychological addiction. The term "addict" is widely seen to be pejorative. Within some models, some individuals are thought to have a proclivity towards drug addiction, and are said to have an addictive personality.*

Amphetamines: *speed, Dexedrine: stimulant (upper drugs acting on the Central Nervous System.)*

Ampoule: *small vials of glass or plastic, containing drugs for injecting; examples include methadone, Valium, Df118 and certain Anabolic steroids.*

Analgesic: *A drug that relieves pain; there are Narcotic Analgesics which contain opiate-type drugs, and can produce dependence, Non-narcotic analgesics such as Aspirin which are not opiate based, and Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAID) such as Ibuprofen.*

Antidepressants: *are used to relieve the symptoms of depressive illness.*

Anxiolytic: *Drugs that relieve medically-diagnosed anxiety.*

B:

Barbiturate: *Depressant-drugs used as sedatives, general anaesthetics, anticonvulsants and anti-epileptics.*

Benzodiazepine: *Large family of depressant drugs that includes Valium, Temazepam*

Butyl Nitrite: *Commonly available form of an Alkyl Nitrite, a drug controlled under the Medicines Act; Poppers*

C:

Cannabis: *Plant from which is derived drug of the same name.*

CNS: *The Central Nervous System, upon which certain drugs act.*

Cocaine: *Charlie, Coke, Cocaine Hydrochloride. Stimulant drug derived from coca plant.*

Controlled Drug: *A drug whose use is restricted under the Misuse of Drugs Act; a controlled drug will be listed in the act by Class and Schedule.*

D:

Dependency: *the World Health Organisation defined dependency as "a state, psychic and sometimes also physical, resulting from the interaction between a living organism and a drug, characterised by behavioural and other responses that always include a compulsion to take the drug on a continuous or periodic basis in order to experience its psychic effects, and sometimes to avoid the discomfort of its absence. Tolerance may or may not be present. A person may be dependent on one or more drug.*

Depressant: *A drug whose effect is to slow down the functioning of the CNS and some organs.*

Detoxification: *the process by which drugs are cleared from the body, leaving an individual drug-free. There are various treatments that support and encourage this process. See section on drug treatments and interventions.*

Disassociative-anaesthetic: *Analgesics that cause a sense of mind/body separation.*

Drug: *In a broad scientific sense, a drug is a substance, natural or artificial, that by its chemical nature alters structure or function in a living organism.*

Dual diagnosis: *A much-debated term, usually means that both drug use and mental health issues are present and that there is a relationship between the two that makes it difficult or not possible to tackle the two independently.*

E:

Ecstasy: *the drug MDMA, E, XTC*

Enactogenic: *a term used by a few organisations to describe the family of drugs of which MDMA, MDA and MDEA are all part.*

Ephedrine: *CNS stimulant drug*

F:

G:

Guarana: *Naturally occurring Amazonian plant extract which is a CNS stimulant; a legal high.*

GHB: *Gamma Hydroxy Butyrate; drug controlled under the Medicines Act, popular in club settings; aka GBH.*

H:

Hallucinogen: *A confusing term for drugs that cause distortion of perception, not necessarily true hallucinations. While some drugs like LSD clearly fall into this category, many other drugs such as cannabis, alcohol can also cause some sensory-distortion yet are often not classed as true hallucinogens.*

Heroin: *opiate drug derived from the opium poppy.*

Hypnotic: *Drugs that induce sleep by their action on the brain.*

I:

Intravenous: *technically, the introduction of a drug into a vein, but widely used to refer to all injecting drug use.*

J:

K:

Kava Kava: *A CNS stimulant, a legal high.*

Ketamine: *a dissociative anaesthetic, K, Special-K.*

Khat: *qat, kat; a CNS stimulant. Young leaves of the khat plant chewed for their stimulant effects. A legal high in the UK.*

L:

Linctus: *methadone-based preparation primarily used for chronic cough problems; the term is often used incorrectly in place of methadone mixture.*

M:

MAOI: *Monoamine-Oxidase Inhibitor: group of anti-depressant drugs which can relieve some symptoms of depressive illness by slowing the breakdown of monoamines such as noradrenaline and serotonin. Can result in severe interactions with some other drugs and food stuffs.*

Marijuana: *Drug derived from the cannabis plant.*

MDA: *Methylenedioxyamphetamine: a PhenylEthylAmine related to Ecstasy, but more Trippy*

MDEA: *Methylenedioxyethylamphetamine: A PhenylEthylAmine, related to Ecstasy but more speedy.*

MDMA: *Methylenedioxymethylamphetamine: true Ecstasy*

N:

Narcotic: In the UK, a drug that causes drowsiness and insensibility, usually opiates, but also sedatives, hypnotics and alcohol. In the US the term is used to describe any addictive drug that is being used illegally, including cannabis and speed and is the subject of abuse.

Needle-fixation: A compulsion to use intravenously. Some commentators don't credit it with much importance.

O:

Opiate; Opioid: Drugs that are derived from or synthetic versions of the opium poppy.

Opium: Depressant drug extracted from the sap of the opium poppy. In this raw, unrefined state, the drug is widely used recreationally, though less so in the UK.

OTCs: Drugs that are available as medicines in pharmacies without a prescription.

Overdose: Strictly, an overdose is taking more than the suggested dose, whether of a medical drug or otherwise. So taking more than two paracetamols within the set time-frame would be an overdose. More usually, the term is used when there is an associated risk to health or even life. Many people overdose, but fatal overdoses are less common.

P:

Painkiller: a widely used lay-term for analgesics.

PCP: phencyclidine, AngelDust, a Disassociative anaesthetic.

PhenylEthylAmine: A massive family of drugs which includes Ecstasy.

Polydrug Use: The use of two or more drugs; usually assumes some interaction between the drugs.

POM: a Prescription-Only medicine. Only available from a pharmacy with a prescription.

Psilocybin: A chemical found in certain mushrooms, especially Liberty Caps (magic Mushrooms), a hallucinogenic compound similar in effect to LSD

Q:

R:

Rehab: Rehabilitation centre; there are many different types of rehabilitation centre offering different programmes and environments

Relapse: using a drug again after a period of being drug-free.

S:

Sedative: drugs that calm and soothe, relieving anxiety and nervous tension; may be Anxiolytic and/or hypnotic.

Sharps: contaminated surgical waste, in this context used injecting equipment.

Sleeping Pills: drugs prescribed to encourage sleep; Hypnotics.

Solvents: a widely-used term that denotes products that can be inhaled to achieve intoxication;

SSRI: selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor: family on antidepressant drugs which includes Prozac, and act to increase levels of serotonin in the brain.

Stimulant: A drug that acts on the CNS, increasing some rates of function such as heart-rate.

T:

THC: Tetrahydrocannabinols; Active chemical compound found in cannabis plant.

Tranquilliser: drugs that calm, soothe, relieve anxiety and may also cause drowsiness.

U:

V:

Volatile Substances: a preferential term to solvents; in this context, a group of substances which give off vapours that can be inhaled to achieve intoxication.

W:

Withdrawal: The experience, which may be unpleasant, of a drug being cleared from the body, and the body adjusting to function without the drug. The best example is the withdrawal from heroin.

Drug Terms: Slang:

The following list covers some street-terms for drugs, drug use, and drug paraphernalia. It is by no means comprehensive. Furthermore, drug slang depends a great deal on local dialect, culture, and time. Drugs, drug terms and slang vary a great deal, so the following list should be used with caution.

A:

Acid: *LSD, Lysergic Acid Diethylamide.*

Adam: *MDMA; Ecstasy*

Amp: *Ampoule*

Apples: *Brand of ecstasy*

B:

Back-loading: *method of filling one syringe with another, by removing the plunger of the empty syringe and squirting the contents of the full syringe into the back of the empty one.*

Bad hit: *an unpleasant reaction to injecting drugs, possibly caused by injecting poor quality or contaminated drugs, using dirty equipment, or missing the site. Also known as a Dirty Hit.*

Bag: *packaging for drugs, especially heroin, which is often sold in small bags, e.g. a £10 bag.*

Banging Up: *injecting*

Bar: *term for larger quantities of cannabis, ounce bar or kilo bar.*

Barbs: *barbiturates*

Barrel: *part of syringe, the graduated cylinder that hold the liquid.*

Base: *cocaine that has been freed from its base (crack); grey, putty-like amphetamine based compound, typically far stronger than amphetamine sulphate.*

Benzos: *Benzodiazepines, tranquillisers*

Billy: *billy-whizz; amphetamines.*

Biscuits: *Disco-biscuits, Ecstasy*

Black: *Cannabis resin, typically soft, malleable and a bit oily.*

Blow: *cannabis, usually resin but is used for grass as well.*

Blowback: *sharing a spliff with someone else by blowing through the lit end while the recipient inhales on the other end.*

Bob: *bob-hope, Dope: cannabis*

Bombed: *Usually, amphetamines wrapped in a cigarette paper and swallowed.*

Bones: *crack-cocaine*

Bong: *pipe, often part-filled with water, used to smoke cannabis*

Brew: *Special Brew; strong lager.*

Brown: *Street heroin*

Burgers: *Ecstasy*

Bush: *Herbal cannabis, mainly flowering heads.*

Butane: *gas, used in lighter refills, inhaled to achieve intoxication*

C:

Callies: *type of Ecstasy*

Charlie: *cocaine*

Chasing the dragon: *smoking heroin from a piece of silver foil. The heroin is placed in a line on the foil and heated from below. The heroin becomes liquid and gives off a curl of smoke which is inhaled through a tube.*

China White: *Very pure heroin, scarce in the UK, more available in the US.*

Clean: *drug-free*

Clucking: *withdrawing from or experiencing withdrawal from heroin or other opiates.*

Coke: *cocaine*

Cold Turkey: *the symptoms and experience of withdrawing from heroin.*

Coming up: *the point at which a drug, typically Ecstasy, starts to have its effect. Pulse rate increases, and a user may feel exhilarated, anxious, paranoid, and breathless.*

Cooking-up: *preparing drugs, especially Heroin, for injection.*

Crack: *cocaine that has been treated to free it from its hydrochloride base, allowing it to be smoked.*

Cranking: *injecting*

Crystal meth: *methamphetamine, ice.*

Cut: *Adulterants added to a drug to increase its bulk.*

D:

Deal: *sell illegal drugs; a purchase of drugs (e.g. a £10 deal.)*

Dennis the Menace: *ecstasy, usually in red and black capsules.*

Dexies: *dexedrine, dexamphetamine sulphate; amphetamine-type CNS stimulants.*

Dikes: *diconal; an opiate analgesic.*

DFs: *DF118, Dihydrocodeine; an opiate analgesic*

Dope: *cannabis*

Double Zero: *Cannabis resin*

Doves: *ecstasy, usually round white tablets with dove imprint.*

Downers: *depressant drugs.*

Draw: *cannabis*

Drawing-up: *using a syringe to suck prepared drugs from a spoon for injection.*

Dropped: *taken, swallowed (e.g. How long ago did you drop that E.)*

E:

E's: *Ecstasy*

Eggs: *Temazepam capsules*

Eighth: *Deal of cannabis weighing an eighth of an ounce.*

Eve: *MDE, A PhenylEthylAmine similar to Ecstasy, but more speedy.*

F:

Fix: *injecting drugs (e.g. "I've been fixing or two years,) preparing drugs for injection(e.g. "You score, I'll fix it up"), drugs needed to maintain a habit, (e.g. if I don't get my fix, I'll be ill.)"*

Flashback: *Experiencing moments of an LSD trip a considerable period after using the drug. Flashbacks can occur weeks, months or rarely years after the actual acid experience. While lasting only a short time, such flashbacks can be disorientating and scary.*

Flatpress: *Cannabis resin.*

Flushing: *after finding a vein, a small amount of blood is drawn into the syringe prior to injecting. Some users will flush several times after injecting.*

Freebase: *cocaine that has been treated to free it from its hydrochloride base, allowing it to be smoked.*

Frontloading: *method of filling one syringe with another, by removing the needle of the empty syringe and squirting the contents of the full syringe into the nozzle of the empty one.*

G:

Ganja: *cannabis*

Gas: *butane gas, a volatile substance.*

Gauching: *Heavily sedated through using opiates; user will appear drowsy, and appear to drop off mid sentence or activity.*

GBH: *GHB, GammaHydroxy Butyrate*

Gear: *cannabis or heroin.*

Glue: *adhesives that are also used as volatile substances*

Grass: *cannabis, in herbal form.*

Green: *Herbal cannabis*

H:

H: *Heroin*

Habit: *being dependent on a drug (e.g. "I've had a habit for three years,") or the amount being used (e.g. I've got a gramme a day habit.)*

Hash: *cannabis resin*

Hash-cakes: *Cannabis cooked into cakes.*

Hemp: *the cannabis plant, its seeds, and fabric or rope derived from the plant.*

Herb: *Cannabis in leaf or flower form.*

Hit: *injected drugs; the effect of drugs reaching the brain.*

Homegrown: *herbal cannabis grown on a small scale; may be low in strength.*

Hooked: *Addicted, dependent*

Horse: *Heroin*

Hot Knives: *Method of taking cannabis by placing a pellet of resin between two heated knife blades and inhaling the smoke as the pellet vaporises.*

I:

Ice: *methamphetamine, a powerful smokeable CNS stimulant.*

J:

Jacking-up: *injecting*

Jagging: *injecting*

Jellies: *Temazepam capsules*

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Juice: *methadone mixture*

Junk: *heroin*

Junky: *a person who is dependent on a drug, usually heroin. While the term is widely seen as derogatory, many people who use drugs use the term self-referentially.*

K:

K-Holing: *taking Ketamine, the experience of using Ketamine.*

L:

Lick the bones: *smoke crack*

Liquid Cosh: *Largactil, a powerful antipsychotic medication.*

M:

Mainlining: *Using drugs intravenously.*

Meth: *methadone, methamphetamine or methedrine.*

Microdots: *form of LSD which are small pellets, little larger than 2mm across.*

Munchies: *Intense desire for food brought on by taking cannabis.*

Mushies: *Magic mushrooms*

N:

O:

OD: *overdose*

Off it: *drug free, (e.g. "I'm off the gear now.")*

Ohms: *LSD design featuring symbol of an ohm.*

Oil: *cannabis oil; oily liquid high in THC.*

On one: *under the influence of a drug, typically Ecstasy or LSD*

Out of it: *heavily intoxicated, possibly past the point of rational conversation or actions.*

P:

Penguins: *LSD design illustrated with a picture of a penguin.*

Pills: *generic term for drugs in pill form; may refer to nearly any drugs, though is often used in relation to Ecstasy.*

Pins: *needles for injection.*

Pinned: *Under the influence of opiates, typified by contracted (pinned) pupils.*

Plunger: *Part of a syringe.*

Poppers: *amyl or butyl nitrites.*

Pot: *cannabis*

Puff: *Cannabis*

Q:

Qat: *Khat*

R:

Rattling: *feeling unwell due to withdrawal from drugs.*

Red Seal: *cannabis resin*

Rhubarb and Custard: *Type of Ecstasy, usually sold in yellow and purple capsules.*

Roach: *Small piece of cardboard placed in end of spliff.*

Rocks: *lumps of crack cocaine.*

Rocky: *cannabis resin, usually hard and dry texture.*

Rohies: *Rohypnol*

Rush: *Amyl Nitrites; the sense of drugs impacting rapidly on the body, of Heroin when injected or of stimulants as they start to take effect.*

S:

Score: *to purchase drugs illegally*

Script: *Prescription, usually for controlled drugs.*

Sensimellia: *cannabis, the flowering heads of the female cannabis plant.*

Shit: *heroin; cannabis*

Shrooms: *Magic mushrooms.*

Sixteenth: *smallest deal of cannabis, a sixteenth of an ounce.*

Skag: *heroin*

Skin Up: *Prepare cannabis in a spliff.*

Skunk: *hybrid strain of cannabis, bred in Holland, stronger than typical cannabis.*

Smack: *heroin*

Snort: *Take drugs, mainly cocaine, amphetamines or heroin by inhaling into the nasal passages.*

Snow: *cocaine*

Snowball: *Ecstasy type substance, often more MDA than MDMA.*

Soap: *cannabis resin, usually comes in smooth brown rounded bars.*

Solid: *Cannabis resin*

Special K: *Ketamine.*

Speed: *amphetamines.*

Speedball: *mixture of an upper and a downer, usually speed and heroin or cocaine and heroin.*

Spliff: *cannabis; cannabis that has been put into cigarette papers with tobacco to smoke.*

Stoned: *generic term for under the effects of drugs, mostly associated with cannabis.*

Stones: *lumps of crack cocaine.*

Strawberries: *LSD illustrated with a picture of a strawberry.*

T:

Tab: *LSD; cigarettes.*

Teenth: *sixteenth of an ounce of cannabis.*

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Temazzies: *Temazepam*.

Tolly: *toluene, a solvent*.

Tranx: *tranquillisers*

Trip: *LSD; sometimes used for Ecstasy; also the act of using LSD (e.g. I'm tripping.)*

U:

Uppers: *Generic term for stimulant drugs.*

V:

Vallies: *Valium*

Vitamin K: *Ketamine*

W:

Wacky Baccy: *Cannabis*

Weed: *Cannabis (herbal form).*

White Lightning: *LSD*

Whiz: *Amphetamines*

Wobbly Eggs: *Temazepam capsules.*

Wrap: *Small folded paper packet used for selling powdered drugs especially cocaine and speed.*

X:

XTC: *Ecstasy, MDMA.*

Y:

Z:

Zero Zero: *Cannabis resin, Double Zero.*