

Fact Sheet

Amyl and Butyl Nitrites

AKA: Amyl Nitrite, Butyl Nitrite, Isobutyl Nitrite, Poppers, Rush, Liquid Gold, etc

SOURCE: Sold in sex shops, joke shops, Internet and other similar outlets.

APPEARANCE: Yellowish liquid usually sold in small, dark brown bottles.

COST: Approximately £2-5 per bottle.

QUALITY: Amyl Nitrites are often mistakenly labelled as Butyl Nitrites and vice versa.

METHODS of USE: Nitrites are usually inhaled straight from the bottle.

EFFECTS: Amyl Nitrites cause 'involuntary muscles' to relax - such as those around blood vessels and the sphincter. Users experience dizziness, fainting-type feelings, a rapid increase in heart rate, and an accompanying rushing sensation, especially in the head. Users may experience nausea and headaches. The effects wear off after a few minutes.

Users tend to feel giggly and mildly euphoric for a brief period. Some people find or claim that it can enhance sexual performance and orgasm. **HEALTH IMPLICATIONS:** Nitrites can cause problems for people with a variety of heart conditions and can cause heart failure in some circumstances. Nitrites have also been linked to rupturing of small blood vessels, especially in the brain.

The accidental or deliberate swallowing of nitrites can be very dangerous and even fatal.

Although nitrites can cause heart-rate to increase they are actually causing a drop in blood-pressure. Amongst people with hypotension, or when combined with drugs that lower blood-pressure (e.g. viagra) the combination increases the risk of fainting, or possibly heart failure.

LEGAL STATUS: Nitrites are controlled under the Medicines Act and can only be legally supplied by outlets licensed to do so, when being used as a medicine. However, possession of Nitrites is not an offence.

OTHER INFORMATION: Nitrites are widely available and relatively cheap. Many young people go through a brief experimental phase that may include Nitrite use, though this is often short-lived.

Nitrites are also popular in club scenes and amongst some Gay men. Uses of Nitrites in these settings include the alleged ability to enhance the effects of Ecstasy, and to facilitate and enhance sexual experiences.

Nitrites were used in medical settings, primarily in the treatment of angina. However, the advent of more effective drugs has meant that nitrites are not normally used in these settings now. They are sometimes sold as room deodorisers, to get round the restrictions of the Medicines Act.