

Becoming informed means being able to answer your own questions about drugs, provide information to your children, and serve as a stepping-stone to find out more if you have any concerns.

Prescription drugs...over-the-counter...street drugs...it's hard to know "what's what" and what they all do. As a parent, it's especially important to know about and be aware of what types of drugs are out there.

The following is a very brief overview of drug groupings to help us understand what drug do:

**Stimulants** - speed up how the body works (increased blood pressure, breathing, pulse rate, blood sugar, energy, appetite) and make the person feel they have more energy. Examples - nicotine, caffeine, cocaine, amphetamines.

**Depressants** - slow down how the body works; they decrease blood pressure, breathing, and pulse rate. Examples - alcohol, opiates, including pain killers, morphine, codeine, heroin, sedatives, sleeping pills, and tranquilizers such as valium, librium and seconal.

**Hallucinogens** - these refer to seeing, feeling, hearing or smelling things that are not there. Cannabis, LSD, psilocybin (magic mushrooms), and mescaline produce hallucinations by stimulating the central nervous system which intensifies all senses resulting in confusion for the brain.

**Inhalants** - Gaseous or liquid substances are inhaled and usually act to depress the central nervous system. Early symptoms of dizziness, slurred speech, excitement, can progress to delirium, hallucinations, and stupor. Examples - organic solvents such as glue, gasoline, metallic paints, volatile nitrates.

Drugs do not effect everyone in the same way. How a drug effects someone depends on: the person (body size, health factors, metabolism etc.) the drug (dosage, purity, etc.) and the environment around the person using. Also, using more than one drug can result in a synergistic effect. A synergistic effect means that the reaction to the combination of drugs is much greater than if they were taken by themselves.

More information about drugs and their effects is available at any ADDAC office or treatment centre.