

HARM REDUCTION FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON

The festive season can be a tough time for many. If you're using substances this holiday season, it's important to prioritise your health and safety. Here are some harm reduction tips that can help you stay safe and minimise risks during this time.



Test Your Drugs: Contamination is common, and many drugs are cut with harmful additives. If you can, use a test kit to check what you're taking. Contact your local harm reduction service to see if they have testing strips available.



Start Small: Always start with a low dose e.g. quarter of a pill or a small test dose of any powder. Your body's tolerance can change, and starting low may reduce the risk of overdose.



Take it slow: Wait at least 2 hours before taking any more. If your powders or pills don't take effect as quickly as you'd expect, don't assume they are poor quality - they may contain another substance that takes longer to kick in.



Avoid Mixing Substances: If you're using one drug, avoid combining it with others—especially alcohol or stimulants. Mixing substances increases the strain on your heart, liver, and nervous system, and can lead to unpredictable effects.



Hydrate: Many substances can cause dehydration, especially stimulants like speed or MDMA. Drink plenty of water throughout the night to keep your body hydrated but avoid overdoing it. Don't go over one pint in one hour as drinking too much can also be dangerous.



Take Breaks: Take regular breaks from partying, dancing, or whatever activity you're involved in. Let your body rest and reset so you don't push it too far. If you are in a hot environment, take regular breaks to cool down.



Snorting? If snorting drugs use your own straw. Sharing straws or banknotes can transmit blood borne viruses like hepatitis C. Using banknotes or used straws can also increase the chances of introducing dirt or germs into your body.



Injecting? If injecting drugs, use your own equipment and make sure you have enough new, sterile equipment for each injection. Sharing or reusing needles, filters, water and spoons risks transmitting or contracting bacterial infections or blood borne viruses like HIV or Hepatitis C.



Look Out for Each Other: Don't leave your friends alone, stay in a group where someone can watch out for you. Let them know what you're using and check in on each other.



Recognise the signs of a stimulant overdose: Stimulant overdose signs can include things like rapid breathing and heart rate, excessive sweating, chest pain, hallucinations, overheating and excessive sweating, rigid muscles, anxiety or panic attacks.



Recognise the signs of an opioid overdose: If a person is unresponsive and has any other sign like: Snoring, Shallow Breathing, Pale Skin, Blue Lips or Pinpoint Pupils, they could be experiencing an overdose. Call 999 and administer naloxone.



Carry Naloxone: Naloxone can reverse the effects of an opioid-related overdose for a short time. It buys a person time until an ambulance arrives, or they can be seen by a medical professional.