

drugs

@parties for guests

People in our community use drugs in private party settings for a range of different reasons. A recent online survey by ACON showed that about two-thirds of respondents partied at home at least once a month, and that a range of legal and illegal drugs had been used, at least occasionally.

Choosing to use illicit drugs at private parties can involve risks to your health. Furthermore, carrying, using or supplying banned substances potentially exposes you (and your party host) to the risk of being charged with a range of serious criminal offences.

The information on this page can help you to make informed choices and reduce these risks.

BEFORE THE PARTY

Plan ahead.

Planning ahead can help to ensure that you enjoy yourself at the party.

- Eat and rest well before the party.
- Carrying more drugs than you plan to use increases the risk of harm from overdosing, or using more than you might have intended. It is also possible that if you are caught by police on the way to or from the party with more drugs than for 'personal use' you could be charged with a supply offence rather than just possession.
- Plan to limit the quantity and the range of different drugs (including alcohol) that you will be using.

Get equipped.

Do you inject?

- Stock up on plenty of clean injecting equipment and an adequately sized sharps disposal bin. Don't expect your host to provide these.
- Using all new, clean equipment when injecting is vital for avoiding the transmission of blood borne viruses.
- ACON's Needle Syringe Program (NSP) or your local NSP can supply all the equipment needed to inject safely including fits, tourniquets, sterile water and sharps disposal bins. Call 02 9206 2000 or 1800 063 060 to ask ACON NSP staff where to find an NSP near you, or outside of business hours call the Alcohol & Drug Information Service (ADIS) on 02 9361 8000.
- NSP staff can answer questions about ways to reduce the risks that injecting brings.

Remember that using drugs at parties can lower inhibitions.

- If sex might happen at the party or after the party, bring plenty of condoms, gloves and water based lube. You can get these for free from ACON. Phone 02 9206 2000 or 1800 063 060 or go to www.acon.org.au.
- Plan to keep to your safe sex rules.

Be informed.

If drugs are being used, it pays to learn about their effects, side effects, and how they can interact with each other.

- Click on the link on the Drugs at Parties page on the www.partyingathome.acon.org.au website for fact sheets about some of the drugs most commonly used.
- Read about sex at parties, first aid for parties and your legal responsibilities at www.partyingathome.com.au.

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DURING THE PARTY

Manage the risks.

Remember, first and foremost, look out for each other.

- It's a good idea to tell your friends what drugs (including alcohol) you've taken, how much and when.
- Check in with each other often.
- If people know what drugs others have taken, hosts can ensure their guests get the right treatment if something goes wrong and medical attention is needed.
- It's a good idea to have a sober person on hand, to keep an eye on friends, and to take charge if something goes wrong. This may be the designated driver of the group.

When using illicit drugs there is no real way of knowing what a substance is or how strong it will be.

- Trying a small amount of the drug first can help to reduce the risk of harm.
- Use drugs with caution – a drug may look the same as it did last time, but that's no indication that it will have the same effect this time around.

Using stimulant drugs such as ecstasy and methamphetamine can increase body temperature and cause dehydration. Using illegal drugs with alcohol can also increase the risk of harm.

- If drugs are being consumed, drinking plenty of water is important.
- If it's hot or you are dancing or moving around, drinking 500ml of water per hour is recommended when using stimulants. If the party is more chilled out, about 250ml per hour is recommended.

Avoid mixing drugs.

Combining different drugs can increase the risk of overdose and other problems.

- Mixing drugs (including alcohol) together can have unpredictable effects on the body.
- Mixing two or more stimulants or several depressants may quickly lead to an overdose.
- Some drug combinations are particularly dangerous. For example mixing GHB with alcohol or with any

other depressants or 'downers' increases the risk of overdose dramatically.

- Combining amyl (poppers) and Viagra can cause a dangerous drop in your blood pressure.

Be aware that people who end up in emergency departments as a result of a drug overdose usually have a number of drugs on board, including alcohol. However, using too much of a single drug can also lead to overdose.

- Only bring along as much of a drug as you plan to use.
- Decide in advance how you will limit the quantity and range of drugs that you will be using.
- Bringing something non-alcoholic to drink can help keep up your fluid levels and reduce the chance that you'll drink too much alcohol.

TIPS

GHB

It's easy to overdose on G. People often overdose if the G is stronger than they're used to, or if they mix it with other depressants like alcohol, sedatives like valium, or opiates.

- If using G, it's advisable to try a small amount first to test how strong it is.
- Leave plenty of time between doses.
- If people are going to be using G, be extra vigilant in checking on them throughout the party.
- If you use G, consider how you will keep track of your doses. You may not remember every dose over the course of the night. One novel approach is to write your G doses on your hand and encourage your friends to do the same.

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In the event that a friend or another partygoer has too much G, remember:

- Not all drug overdoses look the same. Someone who is sleepy after using G may overdose later without anyone noticing.
- If someone who has used G falls asleep on the couch or in a bedroom, check him or her often to make sure that they are breathing and are able to be woken.
- If they stop responding, call an Ambulance and put them in the recovery position.

Overdose.

- The most important thing to remember is to call 000 if someone overdoses.
- Do not hesitate to tell paramedics what drugs a person has used. They are only interested in the patient's health, and won't bring the police unless they believe they will be in danger of violence.
- Check out the First Aid page for more information about stimulant and depressant overdoses and how to respond to them.
- Read more about how to recognise and respond to overdoses of different drugs by downloading the emergencies fact sheet.

Are you injecting?

- Always dispose of used equipment safely.
- Place all used equipment in a sharps bin after every blast. Bring a portable fit bin with you. You can get these from ACON's NSP or your nearest NSP. Call 02 9206 2000 or 1800 063 060 to ask ACON NSP staff where to find an NSP near you, or outside of business hours call the Alcohol & Drug Information Service (ADIS) on 02 9361 8000.

AFTER THE PARTY

Cleaning up.

Put on latex or rubber gloves.

If there is injecting equipment to be disposed of, follow these guidelines for safe disposal:

- Use an adequately sized sharps disposal bin from your NSP.
- Push needles into container with tongs or similar, rather than fingers.
- Use gloves when handling containers.
- Never try to recap needles, put everything straight into the sharps bin.
- Do not separate needle from barrel.
- When handling sharps, only touch the barrel.
- Take your filled sharps container to ACON's NSP or your nearest NSP.

In the unlikely event that you or anyone else gets a needle stick injury, don't panic, but do the following:

- Stay calm.
- Do not squeeze the wound. If it bleeds, allow it to bleed while you wash it.
- Wash the wound with soap and water. Nothing stronger is required.
- Pat dry the wound and apply a sterile dressing such as an adhesive plaster.
- Call the Needle Stick Injury Hotline on 1800 804 823.
- Contact your doctor or go to the Emergency Department of the nearest public hospital.

Help for drug use issues

For treatment options, referrals and information about support groups and counselling, call the Alcohol & Drug Information Service (ADIS) on 02 9361 8000 or ACON's Alcohol & Other Drugs Program on 02 9206 2000 or 1800 063 060.