

Gay Men on drink & drugs



Gay Men on Drink & Drugs

Introduction

Going out on the scene drinking and using drugs seems to go hand in hand. Gay men probably go out more, drink more and take more drugs and do so till an older age than 'straights' (who knows?). Whilst this is not all negative, it can sometimes limit one's horizons and can also catch up with you eventually.

This leaflet is based on talking to gay men in Manchester about what they wanted to see and read in a leaflet. It is not a directory of alcohol and drugs or to tell you that it's wrong. What it is about, is getting you to think why we (as gay men) drink and / or use drugs? The answers you'll have to find for yourself. More information is available by contacting your local Gay Men's organisations. If you feel that any part of using alcohol and drugs is or could become a problem, contact your local drug or alcohol service.

We hope you find this leaflet fun and informative.

Take care!!

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(Manchester Alcohol Service)

Lifeline Manchester



Steve on Drink & Drugs



"I'm sick of all these ten stone weaklings who drink and smoke who tell me I'm risking my health by using steroids. Most gay men are alcoholics compared to straights. Look at me, I could run to Blackpool with a fridge on me back!. I look after myself, I train, I eat the right foods and I don't drink anything but mineral water.

On a Saturday night I go to the 'Love Pump' and take a few 'E's and a bit of whiz, I love the buzz of dancing on 'E'. Afterwards? Well, when you've spent so long getting a six pack and pecks like mine you expect a shag for all your effort."

Disco tits !



Some people who use steroids look and feel fantastic. They take care to eat the right foods, take the right supplements and ensure they get enough sleep. Steroids are great for pumping up your 'disco tits' and although the side effects of using them are often exaggerated it would be foolish to dismiss them. Mood swings, increased aggression, diseases of the liver and kidneys, and worst of all acne (very attractive). Not to mention shrivelled bollocks and sprouting breasts (yes real ones). Steroids can be difficult to take safely over long periods of time. There is such a wide range of steroids and other drugs like insulin used to build muscle, but not such a wide range of information readily available. Advice often comes from friends (and we know how crap our friends' advice can be). If you plan on using steroids, do some research first and find out as much as you can. There are some good information leaflets available from your local drug project and if you inject steroids, they'll give you free syringes.

Stimulant drugs like ecstasy can raise blood pressure and make the heart beat faster, extreme care needs to be taken by steroid users who may already have high blood pressure.

Ecstasy and water

Taking any stimulant drug is putting your heart at risk and dancing in a hot club without a break or a drink of water can lead to heatstroke, the main cause of death from ecstasy. If you are taking ecstasy, or any stimulants, and are dancing all night you should be looking to drink about a pint of water every hour. Sip it rather than drinking large amounts in one go. Isotonic sports drinks are also good to prevent heatstroke. Make sure you have regular rests from dancing to cool down. Try and eat something at least three hours before you take ecstasy. The energy you are using in a good nights dancing is the equivalent of running a marathon, so look after yourself during the week and get plenty of rest. If the worst happens and people collapse- see safety section.

Rod on Drink & Drugs



"Drugs, Drink, Dancing and Sex, in that order, PLEASE!. I tend to get arse holed on any night when there's a drinks promotion on. I go on Happy Hour safaris, but then again it's always 'Happy Hour' when I'm around. I like Poppers for sex, well you know 'Rod by name, rod by nature'. I like to get completely out of it and let myself go when I go to my fav' club 'Funkytastic'. But I am careful with my drugs, HIV positive men have to know what they can take so it doesn't mess up their combination therapy".

***Combination* therapy**



It is rare to find people who are exclusive users of any one drug, most people are poly drug users. Mixing drugs or alcohol is dangerous, the effects can be unpredictable at the best of times.

Rod needs to think about whether it's a good idea to mix street drugs with his combination therapy. Combination therapy is a strong cocktail of drugs anyway and can be a lot to deal with. Chill out and give that lovely body of yours a rest and have the odd night in with a cheesy baked potato and "Southpark".

***Charlie* says!**



What a fucking wonderful drug cocaine is! That's why it costs so much. You started off the evening a fourteen stone nothing with a degree in modern history and D&G top. Two snorts and you feel gorgeous, talented, interesting, - somebody else. Then twenty to thirty minutes later it wears off and you have to snort again. The down side to something so wonderful is that you have to keep it up; it's easy to like the personality that coke brings out in you. Sometimes it can be too frightening to give up that loud and confident personality to go back to who you really are.

Keeping up that front and affording something so expensive are the biggest problems to watch with cocaine. It can be helpful to talk to someone about it if things get too much.

As for ketamine, unless your idea of fun is sitting in a blob having a near death experience, find yourself a new toy Julian!

Julian on Drink & Drugs

(with matching Fag Hag)



" I'd never touch heroin, what do you think they call it brown for?... 'cause its shit!. I've probably tried everything else, I used poppers a lot when I was a kid, but I think they're a bit seedy now. I keep the best coke for my friends and all the shit I sell. Most of them wouldn't appreciate it anyway. I'm young and I'm making the most of it. I like to wash my coke down with Red Bull and vodka. I still love 'E's, how else you gonna keep dancing all night, you can't last that long on alcohol. I like ketamine for getting totally out of it as my 'E's are wearing off. People say cocaine changes your personality and can make you arrogant and aggressive, but that's just wankers who can't take their drugs."

Malcolm on Drink & Drugs



I don't really bother much with the scene these days. I got mugged in the street the last time I went to a gay bar. But, to be honest by the time I've got home and marked 3C's geography assignments, its all I can do, to skin up and pour myself a glass of wine and listen to some Mahler. I suppose I smoke most nights, well every night really, it's justit's just that..... what was I saying?"

Old smokey



What can be said about cannabis that we don't already know. Millions of people smoke it and gay men are part of that. Lots of gay men feel like Malcolm. They don't think much of the scene, they've got their own circle of friends and like the odd bit of blow, well quite a lot actually. Cannabis is not addictive, but it is easy to become a couch potato, losing interest in anything else but that next fat spliff. C'mon Malcolm get out more!

Though cannabis is probably the safest drug around, this doesn't mean there aren't problems associated with its use. If Malcolm got busted he would probably get a caution. This doesn't sound too bad, except Malcolm is a school teacher and he could lose his job or career prospects.

Old Bill



In most parts of Britain if you are arrested for possession of illegal drugs (this means the police find them on you or in your car, etc and they don't think you are trying to sell them), provided you are reasonable with the police they will usually caution you. A caution is where you are arrested and taken to a police station and, if you admit the offence, the police would make a record of it and let you go. If you are caught red handed it's worth admitting the offence to get a caution, but you have the option of saying nothing and asking to speak to the duty solicitor (provided for free). For more serious drugs offences like supplying cocaine, you will almost certainly go to court and jail.

GHB, poppers and ketamine are not covered under the Misuse of Drugs Act so possession is not an offence.

Jeff on Drink & Drugs



"When I go out at the weekend, I look to trap off, have sex and meet people. I mostly go drinking in 'The Old Harbour', or as we say "drop anchor in Bum Bay". I suppose I'm a bit of a piss head, whisky, Breaker, Stella, Special Brew . Drink and the scene go hand in hand, you can hardly come out and not drink.

I usually go dancing in 'The Beef Cave' after, I love me poppers for dancing to Kylie and shagging. I'm in an open relationship at the moment, or to put it another way I'm a bit of a slag.

I tried Viagra last week, I had a hard on all night.....so nothing new there then! "

Poppers



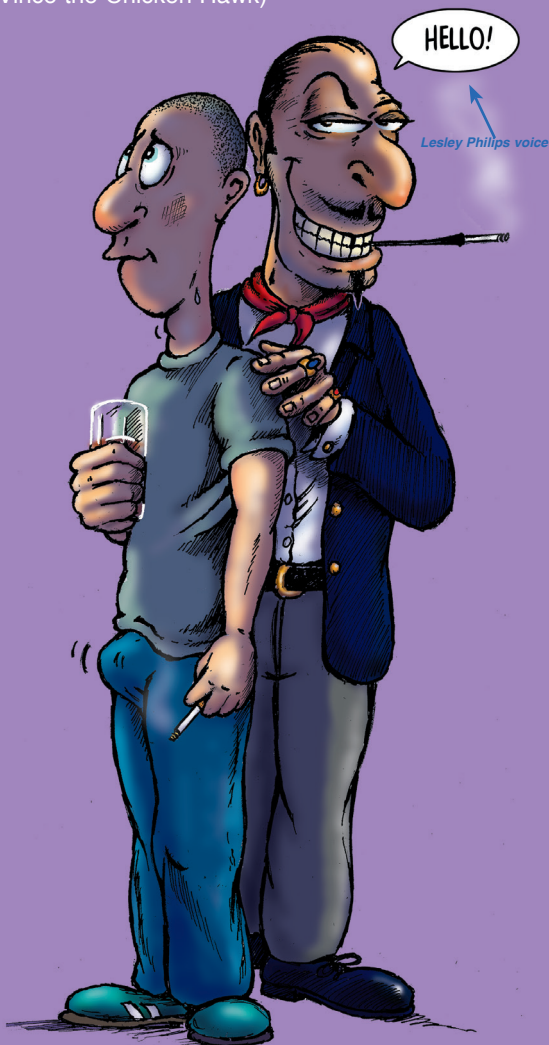
God! How long have poppers been around and they still smell of sweaty feet? It's like they've been part of the gay culture and music for years. Kylie's chorus comes - take a sniff; Sonia's chorus comes - take a sniff; and of course gorgeous hunk goes down on you - take a sniff; Heart racing; head banging; "music sounds better". It's worth considering a couple of things before Kylie asks "What do I have to do?".

Poppers increase your heart rate and blood pressure. Are you sure that your blood pressure can handle this boost? If you are going to sniff loads of poppers (eg Vogue 12 inch remix) try and leave at least three minutes between each sniff. This should help against your heart rate increasing too much and not giving your brain enough oxygen. This may leave you dizzy and you may even pass out (not that you haven't done that before).

Large doses have caused comas, strokes, psychosis, toxic reactions and even in some cases, heart attacks. Poppers are caustic and can cause burning or blistering if spilt on the skin. It's also worth mentioning that both GHB and poppers bottles look very similar. Be aware – drinking poppers will kill you.

As for Viagra (not that you need it of course); it doesn't work properly if you've been drinking; has been known to cause people to have an erection that they can't get rid of for days (titter ye not) and it is probably very risky to use with poppers. In America the deaths from Viagra have been in elderly men on nitrate based heart medication. Poppers are nitrate based, so there is a theoretical risk. Either way it's not worth taking any chances by mixing the two.

Kevin on Drink & Drugs (with Vince the Chicken Hawk)



"I smoked a bit of cannabis when I was at school, but I don't really know about any of these other drugs. I suppose I am curious to see what they are like. I've just come out so I'm new to the scene, to be honest this is my first time in a gay bar. I've come here to get drunk and have a good time. I can't take fellas back to mum's house can I. I'm getting a bit pissed so, I must be careful in case I end up being dragged back to some guys house and shagged..... um?.....double vodka and coke please!"

Coming out



Ah! to be young again and coming out on the scene, nervous but randy as hell. All those pubs and clubs just for us. A place to feel safe (and fancied). A few drinks bought by the odd "sugar daddy" settles the nerves. Getting off your face can be the best of times or the worst of times. We have all done things we regret when pissed and/or high. Where there are drink and/ or drugs and gay men, there's bound to be sex on the menu (and sometimes without any help from drink and drugs) whether that be at the local cruising ground, nightclub, sauna or back home. (see safety section)

This can mean lots of different types of relationships, the one night stand (is still in vogue) or a long-term monogamous or open relationship. Whichever's best for you, there are a few things to consider;

- * Cases of some Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's) including gonorrhoea, genital warts, syphilis and chlamydia are on the increase amongst Gay Men.
- * All of the above, and many more, are treatable at your local GUM Clinic. See back for details.
- * STI's might not show any symptoms (asymptomatic) but are still infectious and may cause long term problems.
- * The only way to be sure is to visit a GUM clinic on a regular basis for that all-important "Sexual Health MOT".
- * HIV is still with us and still affects our community.
- * Correct use of condoms and lube can significantly reduce the risk of becoming infected with HIV and other STI's.

Gay men's organisations will have plenty of information leaflets on 'Safer sex'. These will cover topics such as sexually transmitted infections, hepatitis, testicular health and HIV/AIDS. These are available in most gay venues.

Danny on Drink & Drugs



"You'll find me larging it every weekend somewhere, I can fucking dance all night on drugs. I wanna dance to some spanking tunes, not interact with anyone. I'll take 'E' when I can afford it and GHB when anybody has it and as much speed as I can get hold of . I've been using GHB for over a year now. GHB's cheap for a start and it makes me 'E's last longer. I did pass out once on GHB, when I had been drinking, just completely comatose. I couldn't remember anything, I was in a men only sauna at the time; I woke up three hours later feeling great apart from this sore arse".

Davina on Drink & Drugs



"I like a drop of Gin, the old 'Mother's Ruin', but that's not really a drug is it? My Dad was a raging alchy, so I suppose I'm taking after him. But drugs?, I'd never touch them, I'm dead straight, if you know what I mean. I tried to smoke a bit of wacky backy once, but it didn't do anything for me. I know all about drugs though. Our Shaun's been on heroin since he was sixteen, I don't have anything to do with him now after he robbed me the last time I saw him. I still love him though even if he is a thieving smackhead."

To be or to GHB

GHB is one of the newer drugs around and is causing a bit of a stir in some parts of Britain (and more than a stir in some people's underpants by all accounts).



Sometimes wrongly called "liquid ecstasy" in low doses it can give feelings of mild euphoria and well being, increased confidence and a loss of your inhibitions. GHB is claimed to be "synergistic" which means that it adds to the effects of other drugs so that the combination of the two can be more powerful than the effects of either. Small increases in the amounts taken can result in feeling giddy, or slurring speech, dizziness, loss of co-ordination and vomiting. At high doses GHB will induce sleep or literally "knock you out" particularly if mixed with alcohol. There has already been a death from choking on vomit caused by GHB. If this happens to a friend of yours put them in the recovery position (see section on safety). Then call for an ambulance. They might well sleep it off, but it's not worth the risk.

For more information about GHB get a copy of Lifeline's leaflet "GHB: The Big Sleep "

Drugs are drugs

You're a big girl now Davina and at the end of the day, drugs are drugs. Whether it's caffeine, alcohol or smack, we all like our "fix", but too much of any good thing can cause us problems. Too much chocolate cake can make us sick (and put weight on) just as too much alcohol can make us gorgeous one minute and sick as a dog the next. Drinking too much over a long time (months and years) can cause problems with our liver. Booze affects our judgement (especially our taste in men). This can also mean that we are less wary or more vulnerable to getting hassle or beaten up (and who can run in a tight frock and mules after a schooner of sherry?) A bit of planning can help make sure that we're safe right from the start.



***Safer* safety**

Pre-order your return taxi before leaving home, obviously keeping your taxi fare to one side (if you can).

Tell someone where you're going, and if you don't want to do that, what time you think you'll be back (obviously ring them if you get lucky).

If you cop off, make a mental note of the route of where they live so you can get home on your own.

Thinking about what you wear and the way you are dressed can avoid unwanted attention. You can expect the odd glance or two in a sequinned backless number with fishtail and matching head-dress.

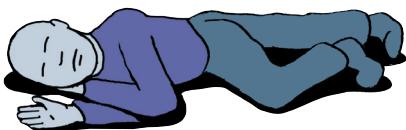
If you get into difficulty, and you can't run away, shouting FIRE attracts more attention than HELP.

Cruising for sex can make us vulnerable to being harassed, attacked or even arrested. Homophobia is still a reality and homophobic attacks are still around in Britain. Cruising grounds can be dangerous places. Before going cruising, again it might be useful to get some information or advice from your local gay organisation.

If the worst happens and you are attacked, it is worth reporting. If nobody reports it, nobody is going to do anything.

If somebody is unconscious through drink, drugs, acts of violence or anything else for that matter, put them in the recovery position and ring for an ambulance.

Recovery position



Russell on Drink & Drugs



"I'm an airline steward, a 'trolley dolly', so I worry about booze making me fat. I'd never fit in the uniform and they would sack me if I got a beer belly wouldn't they? I drink shorts most of the time, although I do like Stella. It gets me real horny, not aggressive, like him. If he drinks too much, there's always trouble. He's either fighting in the street or getting shagged by some old dog".

Booze and mood

God Russell! You're going out with a rough diamond. Sounds like he gets right moody after the odd 'bevy' (or two or three or four...).



Alcohol does some strange things to people. Some people get depressed, some happy, some lonely and some very violent. Too much booze can result in loss of memory, judgement (and sometimes your knickers).

Going out with somebody like this can be difficult. One minute they're as high as a kite, the next you've got a smack around the chops and you don't know where it came from. They give the same explanation most of the time - "it's just the drink". Too right it's the drink!

They can raise their fist, but after a few pints, they can't raise anything else!!! Alcohol can affect your sexual performance. Cutting down on the amount you drink may result in an improvement in the 'Calvin's' department.

Strong Stuff

Be aware of the strength of the alcohol you're drinking and or any drugs you've taken. It can affect your ability to drive (legally) and operate machinery, even the next day.

Remember it takes 1 hour for 1 unit to go through your liver.

drink	units	hours before you can drive legally
10 pints ordinary beer	20 units	18 hours
10 cans of Stella	25 units	23hrs
10 cans of Breaker	25 units	23hrs
10 cans of Carlsberg Special	40 units	38hrs

Get a cab to work boys!!!

The 5'O'Clock Club on Drink & Drugs (Steady Eddie, Fat Olly and Wayne)



" We meet up as soon as Happy Hour starts, that's why we're called the 5'O'Clock Club. It's expensive going out for a drink, sometimes we buy it from Netto and take it with us into the bar. Fat Olly and Steady Eddie drink the cheapest, strongest lager and I drink strong cider so it doesn't cost as much to get pissed. I drink about five pints a night, that isn't excessive! I think binge drinkers are the worst, they don't drink all week, then they go out at the weekend and really lose the plot. I suppose we go out drinking about five nights a week, we all like weed and poppers and take acid occasionally. It all depends how much money we've got".

The 5 O'clock Club

Loads of us love our beer, even better if it's 'happy hour'. It's cheaper and you can drink for longer. Drinking from early on in the day can mean you feel like you don't need to eat. Hey! more money for beer.

There are a few things worth considering when you're out. Beer and spirits, if you've not eaten, will rot your guts. Get something down your neck before you come out as opposed to on the way home, at least you know where it's come from. And another thing, approximately half of pedestrians killed in road accidents have had more than a couple of drinks. So take care.

Talking of having more than a couple of drinks (and haven't we all), give your liver a break and take a couple of days rest (without alcohol) so that you're fighting fit for the week-end.



Tony on Drink & Drugs



“ So what am I, the token Black? I am a black man first and a gay man second, though there aren’t many of us visible in either community”.

“Frankly I find drugs boring. But if I am with people who are taking coke and they’re interesting people, I can either be bored by them whilst they indulge or join them. It amuses me somewhat, now and again”.

The *Gay scene*

Pubs of a 'dubious nature' have existed in parts of Britain since before the Second World War. The gay scene as we know it today is a very different place from even ten years ago. Gay bars and clubs (in city centres at least) are often the swankiest joints in town. A huge number of straight men and women, attracted to the decor and cosmopolitan atmosphere, now throng the bars and clubs of gay Britain. Some gay men say it's better now, some preferred it when it was less well known and less 'straight'.

The gay scene can give us a sense of belonging and being together in one place to meet our friends, socialise and meet new people. We can be ourselves, feel welcome and part of something. However, not everybody can feel welcome.

Some lesbians view the scene as male orientated, unwelcoming or sometimes just plain threatening. The same may be said for Black and Asian gay men. Looking and being "different", "out" and "proud" is sometimes what being Lesbian and Gay is all about. But the scene can seem to say "you can't be too fat", "you can't be too thin", "you can't be too camp", "you've got to be good-looking, rich, trendy, happy"; the list is endless. These ideas must affect us somewhere along the line, however small. If you feel that that's what the scene expects you to be like, there can be a pressure to conform or you can feel like you don't fit in.

More and more lesbians and gay men recognise that the gay scene is evolving, constantly changing. The scene has loads of positives (and a few negatives) that may affect how we live and how we use drugs and alcohol. The positive and negatives will change and develop over time. The gay scene in Britain of ten years ago is not the scene of today. Who knows what it will look like in ten years time?

And finally

Oh yeh, cigarettes are bad for you.

for advice & *Information*

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