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Cocaine, Heroin and Methamphetamine

No one, especially a young adult, likes to be lectured to about what he/she can or cannot do. It's up to every individual to make an informed decision to remain drug-free or to seek out the assistance they need. This may not always be possible, especially when dealing with addiction. The key to success is education, awareness and support. In this article, we review a few illicit drugs termed illegal opioids and list some of the dangers associated with the use and addiction to these substances.



ADDICTION: This is a highly addictive drug that increases levels of alert-

ness, attention and energy. It is a narcotic stimulant and one of the deadliest street drugs. It is most often sniffed, ingested or rubbed into the gums. To more rapidly absorb the drug into the body, abusers inject it, but this substantially increases the risk of an overdose. Once a person begins taking the drug, it becomes difficult to resist. **EFFECTS:** Cocaine use can lead to respiratory failure, stroke, cerebral hem-

orrhage or heart attack and even death. Children of cocaine-addicted mothers come into the world as addicts themselves. Many may suffer birth defects and a range of other problems. Despite its dangers, cocaine use continues to increase—likely because users find it so difficult to escape from the clutches of addiction. **PULL FACTORS:** Some users believe that the stimulating quality of

cocaine will boost their ability and performance at school or in athletic endeavors. Cocaine in all its forms, is known to produce a guick high that is appealing to many, especially in parties. Whilst it rapidly intensifies happiness, it may equally decreased appetite and create other complications.



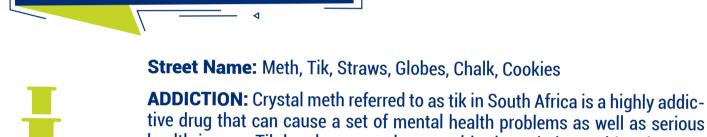
brownish powder and used by millions of addicts around the world. Most heroin is injected, creating additional risks for the user such as HIV/AIDS and

other related infections. Heroin is so addictive that once a person has heroin use disorder, seeking and using the drug becomes their primary purpose in life. This could ultimately lead to overdose and even death. **EFFECTS:** Repeated heroin use creates long-term imbalances in neuronal and hormonal systems that are not easily reversed. This may affect decision-making abilities, the ability to regulate behavior and the responses to stressful situations. Heroin also produces profound degrees of tolerance and physical dependence where the body adapts to the presence of the drug, and

drug is taken. Continued heroin use often results in heroin use disorder-a chronic relapsing disease that goes beyond physical dependence and is characterized by uncontrollable drug-seeking, no matter the consequences. PULL FACTORS: Using heroin has been long called the "fix" - without heroin in their system, people who are addicted suffer from symptoms like diarrhea and vomiting, muscle twitches and pins and needles.

withdrawal symptoms occur even within a few hours after the last time the



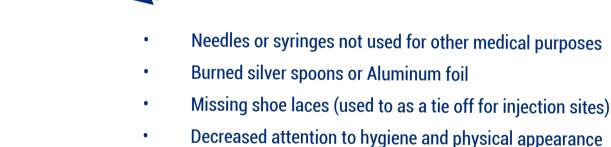


health issues. Tik has become a buzzword in drug circles and has become increasingly popular among young people because it is a cheap drug that has

taken South Africa by storm, causing much damage. EFFECTS: The cravings involved with tik addiction and the strength of the desires for the drug lasts long after having stopped using it, even months after. Long term use creates symptoms like loss of appetite, weight loss, unnecessary aggressive attitudes and behaviors, rapid speech, high anxiety,

insomnia, psychotic symptoms (hallucinations, delusions, aggressive itching of specific areas of the body) and constant headaches. In the first 24 hours following meth use, people may begin to experience initial withdrawal symp-

toms which can include fatigue and increased appetite. You may feel irritable, anxious and depressed. PULL FACTORS: It is often used to help cope or forget problems (e.g. financial concerns, stress, lack of social support, etc), to help reduce inhibitions and increase confidence.



Some indicators of drugs use

- Substantial increase in time spent sleeping Sudden worsening performance, e.g. decline in academic performance
- Wearing long pants or long sleeves to hide needle marks, even in very warm weather

Lying or other deceptive behavior

- Increase in slurred, garbled or incoherent speech
- **GETTING OUT:** Whilst withdrawal can be difficult, addiction is treatable and recovery is pos-

sible. It is often best to go through a withdrawal process under the supervision of trained professionals. Taking care of yourself during this time is vital. Practice effective relapse prevention techniques and be kind to yourself. Most importantly, don't be afraid to reach out to friends, family, support groups, or treatment professionals if you need help. Below are some of the resource



of these

your self-worth

speak to a counsellor

which could be helpful. Connect!

Stay busy - focus on short-term goals; occupy and motivate yourself Exercise to relieve stress - manage your stressors well

End Toxic relationships - re-evaluate the people you associate with and if these push you further into an addiction; perhaps it's time to end some

Practice Positive self- Talk - Believe in yourself and continue to affirm

Support is essential through the recovery process. Find someone who

If you're depressed or find yourself under psychological pressure -

- knows what recovery is like and who can support and mentor you, or attend regular support meetings.
- On reaching out

Acknowledge that you have a problem – it's the first step in seeking assistance

Believe in a friend whom you think can help - speak to them

Contact the CCDU office on info.ccdu@wits.ac.za or alternatively call the

Wits Student Crisis Line *0800 111 331*

SOME USEFUL CONTACTS:

Al-Anon

0861 ALANON (25 26 66)







0800 12 13 14 or **SMS 32312**

social development



REFERENCES:

08611 REHAB (73422) or

(011)673-0400



