

What exactly are drugs?

You can describe drugs using four broad categories

- **Over-the-counter drugs** (for example aspirin or ibuprofen)
These drugs can be bought without a doctor's prescription from a pharmacist or some shops. Misusing these drugs can have harmful side effects. The instructions on how and when to use these drugs must be followed.
- **Prescription drugs**
These drugs are controlled because they could be dangerous or addictive if misused. They must be used under professional guidance. You need a prescription to buy them (usually from your GP). If you don't have a prescription, it is illegal to buy or possess these drugs. Only a pharmacist can sell them to you. If you take these drugs without a prescription your health could be in danger - some prescription drugs can cause death when taken without guidance.
- **Novel psychoactive drugs** (formerly known as 'legal highs')
Formerly-legal highs are psychoactive substances which seek to mimic the effects of drugs such as cocaine and ecstasy. They are not currently controlled as class A, B, or C drugs. However, it is illegal to supply any so-called 'legal highs' for human consumption. This includes selling them or giving them away for free.
- **Illegal, classified drugs** (for example heroin, cocaine or cannabis)
These drugs are classified as A, B or C depending on the harm they may cause. For example, crack cocaine is a class A drug, 'spice', 'mephedrone', cannabis and a large number of synthetic cannabinoids are class B drugs. Ketamine is a currently a class C drug.

If you have any doubts as to what a substance is, seek advice first from a healthcare professional.

Where to get help

If you have a problem with drugs, there's a wide range of addiction services that can help.

Some of these services are provided by the NHS, and some are specialist drug facilities run by charities and private organisations.

A good place to start is to visit your GP. Your GP can discuss your concerns with you, assess the nature of your problems, and help you choose the most appropriate treatment. They might offer to treat you or refer you to your local specialist drug service.

Many drug treatment services accept self-referrals, so if you're not comfortable talking to your GP, you might be able to approach your local drug treatment service directly.

You can find information about local drug treatment services on the Frank website
www.talktofrank.com

If you're having trouble finding the right sort of help, call the Frank drugs helpline on 0300 123 6600. An adviser can talk to you about the different options. Alternatively, you can gain more information through Leicester and Leicestershire Turning Point:

Referrals: LLreferrals@turning-point.co.uk

Website: www.wellbeing.turning-point.co.uk/Leicestershire

Telephone: 0330 303 6000