

don't be a statistic

According to a research study conducted in 2007/8 and published in 2011 by DDRC Healthcare (previously the Diving Diseases Research Centre):

- 22% of the 531 divers who took part in the project said that they had used one or more illicit drug since learning to dive, compared with more than 35% of the UK population.

- More than 3% of the divers admitted to the use of one or more drug in the past 12 months, and 3% in the past month.

- 9% had used a class A drug since learning to dive.

- 21% of the divers who used illegal drugs also admitted to using a class A or B drug between 5 minutes and 24 hours before a dive.

- Cannabis, cocaine, and ecstasy were all reported between 5 minutes and 6 hours before a dive.

- Cannabis was the most popular drug of choice – in line with the national population – with cocaine and ecstasy a close second and third!

- LSD and magic mushrooms were also used by divers.

...don't do drugs & dive

This leaflet has been produced by DDRC Healthcare, a charity (No. 279652) that promotes medical treatment, training and research associated with the use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy in the treatment of diving diseases and other medical problems.

Find out more about DDRC Healthcare at www.ddrc.org;
Facebook & Twitter – [DDRCplymouth](#)

Dive Master Insurance, one of the largest independent providers of recreational dive-related insurance in the world, supported the original concept of this educational leaflet.

Find out more about Dive Master Insurance at www.divemasterinsurance.com

Find out more about the effects of drugs at www.talktofrank.com

illegal drugs & diving

WHAT DO YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT
ILLEGAL (RECREATIONAL) DRUGS?

Do you know?

...for how long some illegal drugs can affect your body, or for how long a drug can be detected in a urine test?

...how an illegal drug may interact with you in the diving environment?...how it can affect you physically or psychologically?

...that the strength of some strains of cannabis has increased more than 10-fold since the 1980s? Regular cannabis use is associated with increased risk of developing psychotic illnesses later in life, including schizophrenia.

A family background of mental illness may increase this risk. It is also possible that frequent use of cannabis can affect the fertility of men and women.

...that cocaine seized by police in 2009 was on average only 33% pure? If you don't know how pure your cocaine is, you won't know how strong it is, or what other substances you may be taking.

...that illegal drug-users are more likely to experience non-fatal accidents than non-users?

...that about 18% of people killed in road accidents have traces of illegal drugs in their blood?

Type, Class, Effect Time & Duration, Detection Times & Side Effects

Stimulants

AMPHETAMINE

UK Class A/B / USA Schedule 2.

Rapid effect with intravenous and smoking use, slower orally, overall effect 4-8 hours, residual up to 12 hours.

Detection time in urine: 1-4 days.

CNS stimulation, increased heart rate, elevated BP, delusions, light sensitivity, anxiety, insomnia, irrational behaviour, headache, hallucinations, can cause convulsions.

May affect judgment and problem-solving ability, and increase hypothermia susceptibility under water.

COCAINE

UK Class A / USA Schedule 2.

Within 5 minutes, with high lasting for 15-30 minutes, general effects 1-2 hours, up to several days for late phase following a binge.

Detection time in urine: 2-4 days.

CNS stimulation, increased heart rate, elevated BP, increased body temperature, disorientated behaviour, euphoria, improved performance in simple tasks, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, increased light sensitivity, feelings of well-being, can cause convulsions.

May impair judgment and ability to respond appropriately while diving.

ECSTASY (MDMA)

UK Class A / USA Schedule 1.

Within 20-30 minutes, desired effect 1 hour, general effect 2-3 hours.

Detection time in urine: Up to 4 days.

CNS stimulation, relaxation, euphoria, changes in perception, impaired performance, panic attacks, visual disturbance, anxiety, dry mouth, sweating, dehydration, can cause convulsions.

May impair judgment and ability to respond appropriately while diving.

Hallucinogens

CANNABIS/MARIJUANA

UK Class B / USA Schedule 1.

Within 10 minutes, high may last up to 2 hours, behavioural and physiological effects return to baseline within 3-5 hours, residual effects in specific behaviours up to 24 hours.

Detection time in urine: 1-3 days but may be 20 days or longer.

Increased cardiac output, vaso-dilatation, dry mouth, decreased co-ordination, impaired learning/memory, euphoria, relaxed inhibitions, subjective slowing of time, apathy, alterations in thought formation and expression, impaired motor performance.

May impair judgment and ability to respond appropriately while diving.

LSD

UK Class A / USA Schedule 1.

Intravenous 10 minutes, oral 20-30 minutes with high at 2-4 hours and diminishing over 6-8 hours. Flashbacks may occur within a few days or more than 1 year after use.

Detection time in urine: 2-5 days.

Changes in perception and mood, decreased co-ordination, subjective slowing of time, hypertension, increased heart rate, panic attacks, loss of personal boundaries, tachycardia, hypertension, sense of dissociation.

May impair judgment and ability to respond appropriately while diving.

MAGIC MUSHROOMS (Psilocybe & Amanita Muscaria)

UK Class A / USA Schedule 1.

Within 30 minutes to 2 hours, high at about

4-10 hours, after-effects a further 2-6 hours.

Detection time in urine: Approx 8 hours.

Increased confidence, distortion of colour, sound and objects, changes in sense of time and movement.

May impair judgment and ability to respond appropriately while diving.

Opiates

HEROIN

UK Class A / USA Schedule 1.

Dependent on route and dosage, from 45 seconds to several minutes, peak effects 1-2 hours, over all effect 3-5 hours.

Detection time in urine: 2-3 days.

CNS depression, light-headedness, reduced respiratory rate, dizziness, euphoria, nausea and vomiting, sedation, intense euphoria, mental clouding.

May impair judgment and ability to respond appropriately while diving.

Depressives, Sedatives & Hypnotics

BARBITURATES

UK Class B / USA Schedule 3.

Long-acting effect within 1-2 hours, total effect 12 hours or longer.

Detection time in urine: Short-acting 1 day, long-acting 2-3 weeks.

CNS depression, cardiovascular system depression, decreased mental acuity, euphoria, depressed respiratory function, anxiety suppression.

May impair judgment and ability to respond appropriately while diving.

The effects of some drugs last for days or weeks. National Statistics estimates that in the past year 8.8% of adults aged 16-59 (almost 3 million people) used illegal drugs, and that 3% (around 1 million) used a Class A drug.

Divers are told during training not to use illegal drugs, but are given few facts and figures or details such as effects on reaction times, class of drug, whether stimulants or hallucinogens – and the risks.

Scuba-diving requires information-processing, recall, reasoning, decision-making, attention and ability to take control of a situation in a number of scenarios – on shore, in a boat, at the water's surface or under water.

These situations may be affected by the use of illegal drugs within certain time-frames. Read on and learn about the types of illegal drug, class, onset and duration of effects, detection in urine, and think about the side-effects – both above and below the water!

the risks and the law

CANNABIS

Possession is illegal, whatever the use (including pain relief). The penalty is up to 5 years in jail. Cannabis may cause feelings of anxiety, suspicion, panic and paranoia.

COCAINE

Possession can land you in jail for up to 7 years. When the effects start to wear off, a long 'comedown' can be experienced, during which you can feel depressed and run-down. This crash can happen for days afterwards.

ECSTASY

You might end up in jail for 7 years. Since 1996 there have been more than 200 ecstasy-related deaths in the UK. Although ecstasy caused many of these deaths, some involve other substances sold as ecstasy, such as the much-stronger PMA.

MAGIC MUSHROOMS

You can have flash-backs, and if you already have mental-health problems magic mushrooms can make them worse. Again, possession is illegal and can land you in jail for up to 7 years and/or with an unlimited fine!

AMPHETAMINES

Speed puts a strain on your heart, so if you have high blood pressure or a heart condition, it's not a good idea – users have died from overdoses. It will put you in jail too, for up to 5 years, and/or result in an unlimited fine.

The Government is creating new drug-driving legislation, which will make it much easier for the police to take action against drug-drivers. These new proposals will make it an offence to drive a motor vehicle if you have certain drugs in excess of specified limits detected in your body.

