

## PHYSICAL HARM

Physical consequences include:

- Poor diet/weight loss
- Muscle wasting and nutritional deficiencies
- Stomach upsets
- Not maintaining your exercise routine
- Premature ageing
- Missing medication for HIV and other illnesses
- Being vulnerable to rape and sexual assault

*'At first losing a bit of weight suited me, but now I look just terrible'*

## TROUBLE WITH THE LAW

Crimes reported include:

- Possession, supplying or dealing drugs
- Blackmail
- Sexual assault

*'I never believed that I would end up in prison...!'*

## PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

Psychological impact includes:

- Unable to enjoy sex without drugs
- Difficulty controlling amount of drug use
- Feelings of guilt and shame
- Isolation and feeling disconnected
- Anxiety and/or depression
- Paranoia or psychosis requiring hospitalization
- Self-harm or harming others

*'I become a totally different person, I just go wild, but afterwards I feel so ashamed about what I have done'*

## WHERE TO GET HELP

If you feel that some of these issues affect you ask to speak to a health adviser who will help you try to get things back under control.

You can access specialist services local to where you live. Most are self-referral with a walk-in service. Please check details before attending

### WANDSWORTH

PNP Clinic  
IDAS, St. John's Therapy Centre  
162 St. Johns Hill, SW11 1SW  
020 8812 4120

### SUTTON & MERTON

CDSSL  
20 Woodcote Road, Wallington, SM6 0NN  
020 8773 9393  
[www.cdssl.org](http://www.cdssl.org)

### KINGSTON

Kingston Wellbeing Service  
Surbiton Health Centre, Ewell Road, Surbiton, KT6 6EZ  
Tel: 020 82743051  
[www.kingstonwellbeingservice.org](http://www.kingstonwellbeingservice.org)  
[kingston.wellbeingservice@nhs.net](mailto:kingston.wellbeingservice@nhs.net)

### RICHMOND

Richmond Integrated Recovery Service  
94 Holly Road, Twickenham TW1 4HF  
020 948 7259  
[www.cri.org.uk](http://www.cri.org.uk)

### CROYDON

Turning Point - Croydon Recovery Network  
Lantern Hall 190 Church Road, Croydon CRO 1SE  
0300 123 9288

### LONDON-WIDE

Antidote - LGBT Drugs/Alcohol Service  
86 Caledonian Road, N1  
020 7833 1674  
[www.londonfriend.org.uk](http://www.londonfriend.org.uk)  
[antidote@londonfriend.org.uk](mailto:antidote@londonfriend.org.uk)

SEXUAL HEALTH

IMPACTING  
HEALTH &  
WELLBEING

*Information for gay  
and bisexual men*

**NHS**  
SWAGNET

## CHEMSEX

Some gay and bisexual men are using drugs with sex ('chemsex') to enhance sexual intensity and boost confidence during sex.

Commonly used drugs include:

- GBL/GHB
- Mephedrone
- Crystal meth
- Cocaine and Ketamine

Some men accessing our clinic are increasingly reporting problems resulting from chemsex and this leaflet highlights potential harmful effects.

## DRUG RELATED HARMFUL EFFECTS

### GBL/GHB/'G'

- Overdose is common – can cause coma and death
- Physical dependence
- Withdrawal symptoms include twitching, anxiety and seizures

*'The drugs make me feel good...but now I've started to have panic attacks'*

### MEPHEDRONE

- Anxiety and paranoia
- Overstimulation of your heart and brain
- Seizures
- Psychological dependence – needing to be high to feel good

### CRYSTAL METH

- Paranoia, anxiety and aggression
- Sexual disinhibition
- Psychosis (believing things that are not true to be real)
- Damage to heart and brain
- Damage to teeth
- Psychological dependence

## RISK TAKING AND PUSHING BOUNDARIES

You may find using drugs makes you more confident but this can lead to taking risks:

- Sex with more people than you planned
- Unprotected anal sex
- Rough sex or fisting causing internal abrasions/tearing
- Other risk taking behaviours e.g. driving under the influence of drugs

*'I had only planned to have safer sex with one guy, but we ended up doing it bareback and two other guys joined in'*

## GETTING INFECTIONS FROM SEX

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are spread more easily from:

- Anal sex without condoms
- Frequent partner change
- Longer sex sessions

*'I keep catching STIs, it's depressing'*

Chems can prolong sex sessions, giving greater opportunity for infections to be passed on. There is also a risk of trauma – abrasions to your penis/anus from repeated friction – causing STIs including HIV and Hepatitis C to be passed more easily.

Some people are 'slamming' (injecting) drugs and getting infections either through sharing equipment or from increased risk taking. 'Slamming' also increases the risk of overdose and other drug-related harmful effects.

### SHIGELLA

There is an outbreak in gay and bisexual men linked to the chemsex scene:

- A bacteria causing serious diarrhoea
- Passed on by infected faeces
- Occurs more easily during group sex, rimming or oral sex after unprotected anal sex

## TROUBLE AT WORK

Time spent on chemsex can leave you exhausted. Consequences include:

- Poor or erratic work performance
- Taking time off work
- Work related stress
- A reputation of being unreliable
- Exhaustion or drowsiness at work
- Disciplinary proceedings
- Losing your job

*'I keep phoning in sick, I'm sure I've missed out on a promotion because of it'*

## TROUBLE AT HOME

Chemsex can become your priority and take over your life resulting in:

- Cancelling important plans with partners, friends and family.
- Becoming disconnected from the important people in your life
- Isolation and the breakdown of relationships

*'My boyfriend left me; the thing is I really loved him'*

## FINANCIAL WORRIES

The amount of money you spend on drugs can become a problem:

- Debt
- Poor credit ratings
- Stealing
- Exchanging sex for drugs
- Eviction
- Selling sex

*'I've maxed my credit cards; I never seem to have money for anything else any more'*