

**Not everyone uses drugs at festivals,
but if you choose to use we want to
raise awareness and educate you about
the current risks to help you to
reduce the harms.**

DRUGS.ie
Drug and Alcohol Information and Support



Festival Drug Do's and Don'ts

All drug use has risks. It's safer not to use drugs at all. If you do, think about how to minimise the harms to your health.

Do:

Check in with yourself.

You could be in a different headspace after COVID restrictions. Each person's mental health status is unique to them. As a result, each person will have a different relationship with substances.

Tell your friends if you decide to use drugs at the festival.

Try to have one friend who doesn't use and be with people you trust.

Plan to take less. Your tolerance may have changed if you stopped using drugs for a while during COVID-19 restrictions.

Start low and go slow, take a small test dose.

Pace yourself by taking a small amount and leaving time in between use can help you identify how you are reacting to the substance. You can then consider if you choose to take more.

Charge your phone, stick together and don't leave anyone alone.

Keep cool and stay hydrated.

Pack a re-useable bottle and get free water at the event. Take breaks from dancing and give yourself time to cool down.

Check the map, know where the medical tent is and know what you will do if there is an emergency.

Be a good bystander and look after yourself and care for others.

Get medical help if needed.

Don't be afraid to get help if you or a friend becomes unwell or feel suicidal after using drugs. At festivals, the medics are your mates and your wellbeing is their main priority.

Always be honest with medics about what was taken, they are there to help.

Knowing what was taken can help them to respond.



Don't:

Try new drugs or new types of drugs for the first time at a music festival.

Drink over a pint of water in an hour.

MDMA can confuse your body temperature, you feel warm, thirsty and urination is difficult. Drinking too much water to cool down or to try urinating can be dangerous. Too much water may lead to 'water intoxication' that can dilute your blood and flush out essential electrolytes that keep your brain and body working.

Use bank notes to snort and avoid sharing snorting paraphernalia (straws/tooters).

Sharing can spread infection.

Mix drugs, including alcohol and prescription medication.

Mixing drugs can lead to unwanted and unpredictable effects and increases your risk of a drug emergency. MDMA can interact with some mental health medications that enhance serotonergic activity such as 'SSRIs'. It can also be risky to suddenly stop taking some prescription medications to use substances.

Rely only on colour metric drug testing kits to keep you safe.

They have limitations.

Use drugs in secluded locations or use alone.

Forget to eat and look after your general wellbeing.

Drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol after the event.

Consider that substances may be in your system and still detected if you choose to drive home.

Use drugs if you feel low, anxious, depressed or have mental health concerns.

Use alcohol or other drugs to cope with social anxiety after COVID restrictions.

Situations that we were comfortable with before may now be strange or difficult. Using during tough times or times of stress can impact on how you react to a substance, including alcohol.

Drug Emergencies

What is a drug emergency?

A drug overdose is when you take too much of a drug for your body to handle.

What can increase your risk of a drug overdose?

- You had stopped using and you start again using the same amount (dose)
- You take too much
- You take too much too soon – remember to start low and go slow
- You take more than one substance at a time 'mixing drugs'
- Taking new types of drugs
- Mental health reasons
- If high strength drugs are in circulation such as MDMA pills & powders at the moment
- Taking a drug that is easy to overdose on such as GHB

Signs of a drug emergency

Temperature

- Change in temperature
- Being too hot or too cold (clammy skin)
- Dehydration, overheating or warm skin (stimulants)

Physical signs

- Blue/pale hands or lips, gurgling or snoring sounds
- Muscle pain, pain in legs
- Dizziness
- Change in speech
- Feeling unwell, nausea or vomiting
- Fast heart beat/pain in chest
- Difficulty breathing
- Seizures or fits

Mental health

- Confusion
- Anxiety or panic
- Change in behaviour
- Paranoia or hallucinations
- Suicidal thoughts

Responsiveness

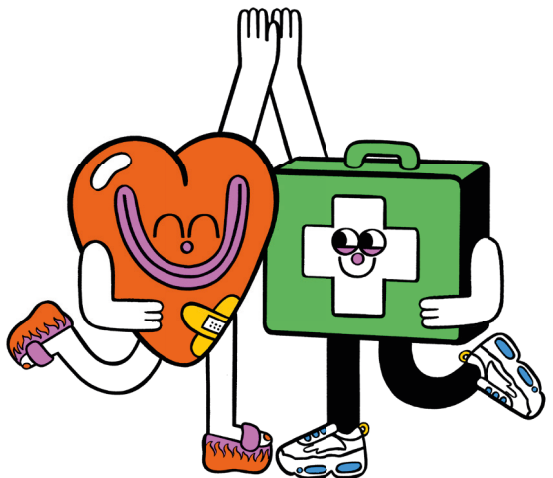
- Drowsiness
- Awake but not responsive
- Appearing sleepy or 'nodding off'
- Unconsciousness

What to do in a drug emergency?

- Stay calm and support the person
- Get them to the event medical tent or alert security staff
- Stay with them
- Don't give them drugs or food
- Don't walk them around to 'walk it off'
- If they are overheating, sit them down, remove layers of clothing and get them to slowly sip on water. Over-hydration is dangerous – only one pint of water an hour is recommended.

If they are unconscious or having difficulty breathing, you should:

- Get help from festival staff.
It is important to get the person to the onsite medics as soon as possible
- If unconscious, put them in the recovery position (or lay them on their side)
- Give the medics the drug that was taken, if possible



Drug Trend Update

High strength drugs

We're concerned about the content and purity of drugs at the moment. Club drugs such as MDMA and cocaine have been increasing in strength. High strength drugs can increase your risk of experiencing a drug emergency and/or overdose. European drug checking agencies have issued alerts about high strength MDMA over the last few years. Ten years ago pills contained roughly 60 - 90 mg of MDMA, now pills can contain 2-3 times the average dose of MDMA (over 200 + mg). The world's strongest MDMA pill was found in Manchester last year. It had 477mg of pure MDMA, which is over 4 times the average dose.

New substances sold as MDMA

The Loop UK has found new cathinone type substances and caffeine in pills, powders and crystals. The Loop UK also recently found four identical pills containing four different substances. Only one contained MDMA. Two contained cathinones and the other contained benzocaine. These substances are strong stimulants. You are at risk of over-consuming by re-dosing, mistaking the substance for weak MDMA. These new substances can also produce a strong urge to re-dose. This can lead to over-consuming, increasing the risks and prolonging the effects.

These substances can cause mental health reactions, anxiety, hallucinations, prolonged stimulation and severe insomnia. Lack of sleep can then increase the risk of developing psychosis. They can also cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Synthetic cannabinoids in plant, vape & edible products

Synthetic cannabinoids have been found in hash/weed, low THC products, vape/liquid and edible sweets in Ireland and in Europe. These products do not contain cannabis but are synthetically made to produce similar and more potent effects. These substances have been linked with poisonings and deaths internationally. You may not be able to visually tell if a product contains cannabis or a synthetic cannabinoid.

Signs of concern to look out for after consuming cannabis products:

Feeling dizzy, confusion, excessive sweating, difficulty breathing, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, nausea and vomiting, agitation, aggression, psychotic behaviour, hallucinations, delusions, seizures or fits and sudden loss of consciousness.

Support after the event

Look after your wellbeing

Eat well including fruit, hydrate and try to get enough sleep after the event. Don't try to use any more drugs to cope with low feelings.

Some drugs like MDMA can lead to a 'come down' after use. This can mean that you might feel tired, withdrawn, anxious or depressed. Some people may even feel suicidal thoughts. Some drugs contain 'synthetic cathinones' which may cause prolonged paranoia, anxiety and insomnia.

If you feel physically or mentally unwell, don't be afraid to get support and be honest about what is going on for you.

Talk to your GP (family doctor) or another local GP, an Out of Hours GP service,, your local hospital or emergency services on **112/999** if you are concerned about your health and wellbeing.

HSE Drug & Alcohol Helpline

The HSE provide a free, confidential and non-judgmental support service for people who use drugs where you can talk about your use of substances, what is going on for you and possible support options.

Freephone the **HSE Drug and Alcohol Helpline** on **1800 459 459**
Monday to Friday 9:30am-5:30pm
or email at **helpline@hse.ie**.

You can find a local drug and alcohol support service on **Drugs.ie/services** where you can also talk with a professional.

For information and harm reduction advice go to **Drugs.ie**.

Mental Health Support

YourMentalHealth.ie has practical advice, services and supports to take care of your mental health.

Freephone YourMentalHealth on **1800 111 888** or visit **YourMentalHealth.ie**.
Freephone **Samaritans 116123**, email **jo@samaritans.ie** or visit **www.samaritans.ie** for help in a mental health emergency or crisis.

Text 50808: A 24/7 free text service, providing everything from a calming chat to immediate support for people going through a mental health or emotional crisis. **Text HELLO to 50808** or visit **www.text50808.ie**

Sexual Health Support

For information on urgent care including sexual assault supports go to: **sexualwellbeing.ie**

