

Alcohol and Drugs in Sport

The use of alcohol and drugs seems contradictory to the popular ideal of sport as a healthy moral and physical pursuit, and yet it has been present in sports culture since clubs first became the focus for competitive games and social gatherings.

Alcohol is a depressant, not a stimulant. This means that it slows down the brain and the central nervous system's processes. From the moment you take your first sip, alcohol starts affecting your body and mind. After one or two drinks you may start feeling more sociable, but drink too much and basic human functions, such as walking and talking, become much harder. You may feel lethargic, start saying things you don't mean and behaving out of character.

Some of alcohol's effects disappear overnight, while others can stay with you a lot longer, or indeed become permanent.

Experts estimate alcohol is responsible for at least 33,000 deaths in the UK each year. Many traditional 'cures', such as drinking black coffee, just don't work or even make things worse.

Drug use causes its own set of problems and just as there are many kinds of drugs available, there are as many reasons for trying them or starting to use them regularly. People take drugs just for the pleasure they believe they can bring. Often it's because someone tried to convince them that drugs would make them feel good or that they'd have a better time if they took them.

These days, drugs can be found everywhere, and it may seem like everyone's doing them. Lots of people are tempted by the excitement or escape that drugs seem to offer. Drugs are chemicals or substances that change the way our bodies work. When you put them into your body (by swallowing, inhaling or injecting them), drugs find their way into your bloodstream and are transported to parts of your body such as your brain. In the brain, drugs may either intensify or dull your senses, alter your sense of alertness, and sometimes decrease physical pain.

Amphetamines are stimulants that accelerate functions in the brain and body. They come in pills or tablets. Prescription diet pills also fall into this category of drugs. They are swallowed, inhaled or injected. If swallowed or snorted, these drugs hit users with a fast high, making them feel powerful, alert or energised. Uppers pump up heart rate, breathing and blood pressure and they can also cause sweating, shaking, headaches, sleeplessness and blurred vision. Prolonged use may cause hallucinations and intense paranoia. Street names: speed, uppers, dexies, bennies.

Amphetamines are psychologically addictive. Users who stop report that they experience various mood problems such as aggression, anxiety and intense cravings for the drug.

The use of alcohol and/or drugs is not acceptable during sporting events. Injuries - to the player affected and to others -- can occur if players are not alert at all times.