

# Nitrous Oxide

Factsheet – August 2020

## Short term

Depending on amounts inhaled, people describe feeling relaxed, happy, giggly, lightheaded, and having mild hallucinations, your voice may sound different and sounds become distorted

Using nitrous oxide affects the ability to think clearly, which may lead to making decisions you normally wouldn't do such as having unsafe sex.

Some people have reported severe headaches and feeling dizzy and sick. It may also make you feel paranoid however this is usually over quite quickly.

As it raises heart rate if you already have a heart or blood pressure problem you are at increased risk

## Long term effects

There are risks of becoming unconscious and dying if you take in too much nitrous oxide in one go, if you have a succession of hits, or use in an enclosed unventilated space.

Death can happen quite suddenly and with no warning.

Research shows links between regular use and reduced vitamin B12 levels which can lead to nerve damage and cause numbness and tingling in hands and feet. If you are using regularly it is advisable to eat food high in vitamin B12 such as eggs, marmite, tuna, cheese, especially if you are a vegetarian

Regular use has also been known to affect mental health and may lead to mood swings and depression.

Classed as a psychoactive substance, it is illegal to produce or supply nitrous oxide to 'get high'



## What is Nitrous Oxide ?

Nitrous oxide is a colourless gas commonly known as laughing gas. It comes in little silver/metal canisters often seen scattered outside clubs and in parks and car parks.

These pressurised canisters are used in whipped cream dispensers, and so are often referred to as 'whippets'.

You may have also heard of nitrous oxide being used as pain relief for women during childbirth, however it is mixed with oxygen when used in this way.

It is a depressant drug and acts in a similar to alcohol, in that it slows down the brain and bodily functions.

It is dangerous to inhale straight from the high pressured canister as it could cause throat muscles to spasm and stop ability to breathe. Generally the gas is transferred from a canister using a device called a 'cracker' into a balloon, and passed from person to person, who each take a 'gulp' from the balloon.

When inhaled it affects the brain via the blood stream almost instantly, depending on how much is used and individual persons build etc, affects may last seconds or a few minutes.

Always use in an open well ventilated space not in a car or small room. Don't take it on your own as if you become unconscious there will be no one to help you, and make sure you use with people you feel safe with

If you would like more information advice or support you are welcome to contact us at

[ypdaservice@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:ypdaservice@milton-keynes.gov.uk)



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