

Harm Reduction



Aims



- To gain a greater awareness and understanding of risks associated with different substances and routes of administration
- Increased confidence in discussing harm reduction strategies with service users

Synthetic Cannabinoids



Synthetic Cannabinoids



- Commonly known as 'Spice' (but there are many other names)
- Organic leaf matter sprayed with laboratory produced synthetic cannabinoids
- CB1 full agonist
- Up to 800 times more potent than THC
- Higher propensity for psychosis
- Can contain powerful stimulants and hallucinogens as well as cannabinoids



Synthetic cannabinoids



- Some effects similar to THC
- Often shorter lasting
- Headaches, sickness
- Hallucinations
- Increased heart rate (160bpm+)
- Sudden rise or fall in blood pressure
- Heart attack
- Panic attacks
- Psychotic episodes
- Catalepsy



Harm reduction



- Do not use alone
- Sit down before using
- Use a match-head size (or less) to test dose with every new packet. Potency is hugely variable
- Always smoke with a 'mixer' (e.g. tobacco or dried herbs)
- Avoid using with other drugs or alcohol
- Be VERY cautious about using in bongs. It is harder to regulate intake and easy to take too much



Harm reduction



- If sustained periods of fast heart rate or chest pains are experienced, call an ambulance
- Bottom of the bag – SCs can be much more concentrated
- Don't get competitive -There is a high risk of overdosing if you get into bouts of competitive use (e.g. in bucket bonges etc.)
- There is no safe way to use Spice - It is not the same as cannabis. Spice is more potent, more unpredictable and more dangerous



Injecting



Injecting



The first and best bit of advice for harm reduction is at all times to try and discourage an IDU (injecting drug user) from injecting and seek safer alternatives...

Only after failing in these should you move onto promoting safer injecting....

Injecting harms



- Tolerance quickly builds up with an injector requiring more & more of the drug to get the same hit. The injecting process will increase
- More injecting sites, less time to heal. Scar tissue, infections, collapsed veins, little or no opportunity to counteract an overdose
- Increased chance of infections – BBV/ flesh eating bacteria/ endocarditis/cellulitis



Injecting Sites



Arms: Safest IV site



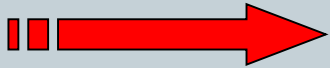
Hands (not fingers)



Feet / ankles: Veins move around and blood pressure lowest



Intramuscular: Into the muscle – bacterial infection risk, not a long-term solution



Back of legs (inject slowly)



Groin and Neck (Not advised at all)

Preparing drugs for injecting



Hygiene;

- Clean preparation area
- Clean sterile equipment including needles, syringes, spoons and filters
- If acidifier is being used only use a new sterile sachet
- Sterile water (boiled tap water or cold tap water)
- Wash hands and injecting site thoroughly with soap and water



Do's ...

- Use the smallest needle appropriate for injecting site
- Keep the amount of citric acid to a minimum
- Inject slowly
- Alternate injecting sites
- Dispose of used injecting equipment in a sharps bin
- Wash your hands before injecting
- Clean your injecting site (BEFORE!) with one wipe
- Inject in the direction of your heart
- Use newspaper for a clean surface
- Tetanus booster & Hep B vaccination
- Inject into veins only

Don'ts ...

- Share equipment
- Use alone
- Mix drugs and alcohol
- Use your fingers to scoop out drug from the bag onto your spoon
- Re-use a needle (can cause trauma to the vein)
- Try to sharpen needle tips (needles can break off in the vein)
- Have another hit to get over a 'dirty' hit
- Lick needle tips
- Use lemon juice (can cause blindness)



Snorting

Snorting - Dangers



- Variety of nasal and sinus diseases can be contracted as mucous membrane can rupture...(Hep C can be transmitted in nasal mucous as well as blood)
- Decrease in blood supply to the nose due to restriction of the blood vessel can cause nosebleeds, crusting and smelly secretions

Snorting - Dangers



- Crusting can lead to a hole, which in turn leads to loss of septum
- Risk of BBVs from sharing snorting equipment
- Adulterants in the drug often do not dissolve and block nasal pathways and sinuses
- Risk of Overdose

Snorting - Dangers



Snorting – Harm reduction



- Chop drug finely
- Place straws high up the nose to get as far past the nasal hairs as possible
- Blow the nose to remove excess powder
- Take a break if nose bleeds repeatedly
- Never share straws due to risk of BBVs
- Don't use bank notes, they may have old blood on them



Smoking

Smoking..



- Spliff
- Pipe
- Bong
- Foil (Chasing)

Smoking..



Homemade Crack Pipes



Smoking - Dangers



- Chemical fumes
- Hot – bad for your lungs
- Inhale ash
- Effect limited – lose a lot of the drug
- Lungs can become extremely irritated
- Chronic coughing, coughing up mucus (Crack lung) and collapsed lung
- Mouth burns and ulcers
- Dehydration of the mouth can become chapped and lead to open sores

Smoking – Harm Reduction



- Never share spliffs or pipes
- Don't share tubes when smoking from foil
- Don't hold drug in lungs when taken in – it does not have a greater effect, but can lead to more lung damage

Smoking – Harm Reduction



- Use toughened glass or metal pipe Preferably use specially made pipe
- Drink plenty of water and use Vaseline on mouth ulcers
- Always use lighters to heat the drug. If anything happens they go out when they are dropped

Oral



Oral – Harm reduction



- Can be one of the safer ways of using a drug
- As the drug needs to be ingested it takes longer to get the hit
- Therefore biggest risk is people using more as they have not had an effect. This can result in a greater risk of overdose

Anally or Up Your Bum-UYB (Note-no picture)



- Drugs entering the anus can be absorbed through the anal mucus membrane
- Prepared in the same way as for injection, but NO NEEDLE USED
- Can be prone to overdose
- Can cause similar damage to the anal mucus membrane that it does to the nasal membrane
- Only really suggested as harm minimisation when all injecting sites are damaged, or need resting

General Harm Reduction



Teeth

Many substances affect teeth. This in turn can affect self esteem and well being. Ensuring visits to dentists for regular check ups is important

Self care

Often people using substances can disregard their personal hygiene and self care. Discussing and addressing this can also improve a persons self belief and self esteem

Hierarchy Of Harm Reduction



- Is stopping use of substances an option?
- Is there scope to move to prescribed drugs from street drugs?
- Is moving from injecting to smoking or oral an option?
- Prevention of sharing equipment
- Prevent and treat wounds
- Improve technique

Questions?



Links and resources



- Drugwise – Harm reduction
<https://www.drugwise.org.uk/harm-reduction-2/>
- Safer injecting practices – London Friend
<http://londonfriend.org.uk/get-support/drugsandalcohol/info-for-playing-safely/safer-injecting-practices/>



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