

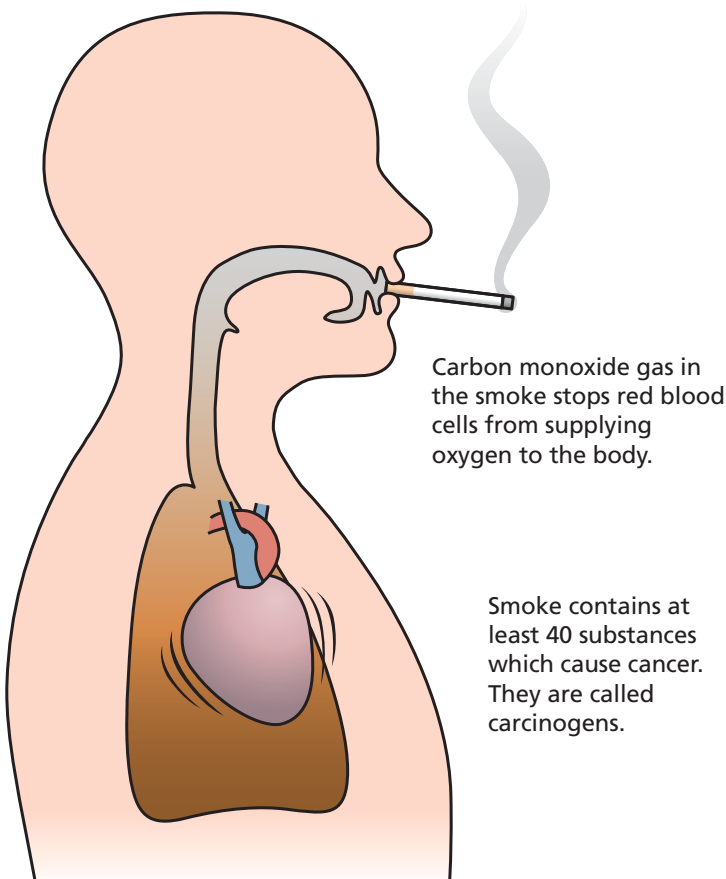


What are harmful drugs?

All chemical substances that we take are drugs, whether solids, liquids or gases. The dangerous ones are those that can cause permanent harm.

The body is a very tolerant chemistry set. But there are limits to what it can take. When you go beyond these limits then things may start to go wrong. We might find ourselves taking risks with our bodies.

▼ (Picture 1) Some of the harmful effects of smoking.

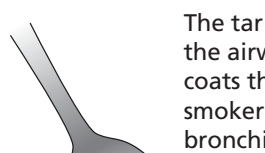


The nicotine in cigarettes is an addictive drug. It raises the heart rate, causing a rushing sensation. The increased blood pressure puts a strain on the heart.

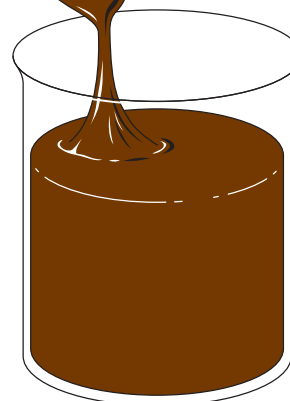
The effects of smoking

Some chemicals, such as those in tobacco smoke, affect our breathing. The chemicals can block the lungs from taking in oxygen, or they may stop dirt in the throat from being removed naturally. As a result, germs can reach the lungs (Picture 1).

If germs get to the lungs, the only way the body can destroy them is by using white cells in the blood. But this causes an irritation to the airways, called bronchitis. The body then attempts to clear the lungs by coughing.



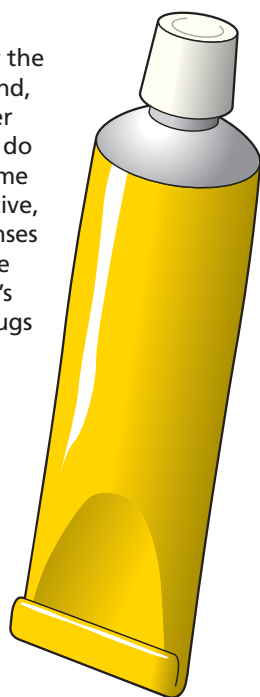
The tar in cigarette smoke can coat the airways and lungs, just as it coats this spoon. This makes the smoker much more prone to colds, bronchitis and lung disease.



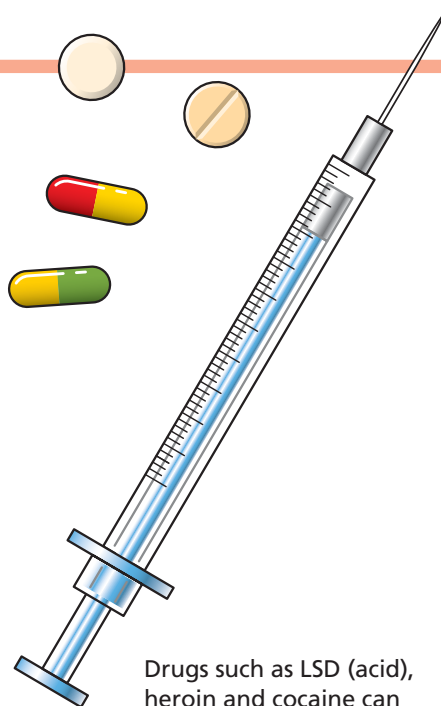
Smoke not breathed in by the smoker can instead be breathed in by nearby people. This is called passive smoking and it can cause harm to non-smokers.

Smoke also clings to clothing and other materials, leaving a strong smell, and after a period of time it stains everything it touches.

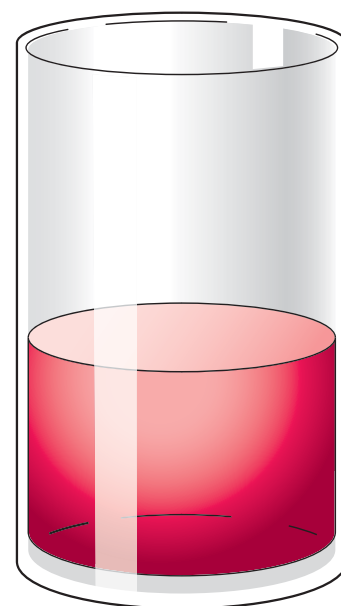
Drugs can alter the state of the mind, making the user see things that do not exist, become unnaturally active, have dulled senses or even become violent. People's reactions to drugs vary and are unpredictable.



Chemicals such as solvents cause severe damage to the lungs and brain.



Drugs such as LSD (acid), heroin and cocaine can cause severe brain damage.



Alcohol is also an addictive drug and can destroy the liver and other organs if taken in large amounts on a regular basis.

▲ (Picture 2) Substance abuse is often addictive (habit-forming). Addicts stop taking care of themselves, so they exercise little, eat poorly and become prone to disease.

Coughing is a very violent activity, and if it is repeated over a long time it can damage lung tissue.

The chemicals in smoke may also affect the way some of the cells grow and make them develop abnormally. This is called cancer. In time, the cancer cells may spread through the body and may cause death.

Alcohol

Alcohol is a liquid found in beer, wine and spirits. In large amounts it can change behaviour. Taken over many years, it can cause liver failure and death.

Substance abuse

The chemicals in many solvents and illegal drugs affect the way the brain cells work. If solvents like glue are sniffed, or certain illegal drugs, such as ecstasy, are taken, then a change in behaviour may occur. Any substance taken in very large amounts can destroy brain cells or kill (Picture 2).

Summary

- Some substances can do the body far more harm than good.
- Tobacco and illegal drugs are harmful in any amount.
- Alcohol can be harmful if taken in excess.