

ru-ok? Briefing – Summer 2021

Newsflash (health warnings and other news):

- **Cocaine:** DJ and friends help others with problematic cocaine use. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-57733774>
- **Harm Reduction:** The Loop and Release have come together to create a new campaign called #HighAlert. Lots of useful advice in this article for anyone choosing to use drugs. <https://metro.co.uk/2021/07/22/what-not-to-do-if-you-get-stopped-by-police-or-security-with-drugs-14966170/?ito=article.desktop.share.top.twitter&fbclid=IwAR0xoP1llhTgsi7zA15aMWERfJz8xFzUFvCLfggwoglrIOEoG8AuyOgNc0o>
- **Overdose awareness:** <https://wearetheloop.org/overdose?fbclid=IwAR0kXzmLjsilCW-dcAG5xr47ykqGiGmbyzOXxzPhktoLsNMXEgRjKdUT1Fk>
- **Summer safety after lockdown:** The Loop AGAIN! Seriously, they do the best harm reduction advice. Please be aware that their advice is for **over 18s** though. DO contact us for more specific under 18 information. <https://metro.co.uk/2021/07/19/high-alert-why-its-so-important-to-help-everyone-party-safely-this-summer-14928333/?fbclid=IwAR0xoP1llhTgsi7zA15aMWERfJz8xFzUFvCLfggwoglrIOEoG8AuyOgNc0o>
- **Children affected by parental alcohol use:** Visit this local exhibition for a collection of stories: [Find Your Oasis - Oasis Project](#) and check out NACOA 's collaboration with a young film-maker to create this short film. https://nacoa.org.uk/pokerface/?fbclid=IwAR1OnXNxdxQ3Y5aeIR2oC7S9LqK0x6Vg_hQKVODWv03HjVZypoCQ-r3tefA
- **Alcohol:** Alcohol poisoning can look like 'passing out' and 'falling asleep' but for some it can be fatal as the body slows to a halt. Recovery position can help reduce the risks but call an ambulance if someone's breathing is shallower. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-57782732?fbclid=IwAR2LL5O4EfRNmPEOFE6VxgxdN2-8R1plOakcE7_nLmBr9esFJDMyi0-dXVI

Current Trends: Ketamine (by ru-ok?'s student, Sarah Hesse)

Ketamine appears to be increasingly popular amongst some young people. Often used as a party drug, Ketamine was initially developed as a veterinarian anaesthetic, later to be commissioned for human use. It changed from a Class C to a Class B substance in 2014. It is often referred to as a "horse tranquilliser", so pictures, emojis and references to horses could be indicators of ketamine talk. Its hallucinogenic, dissociative and anaesthetic properties can make the user feel in a dream like "floaty" state, making them feel chilled, relaxed, and happy. Whilst some people enjoy the "out of body" experience it brings, others may experience frightening hallucinations. Harms include loss of control over the body leading to vulnerability to theft, accident or abuse. Long term use can cause serious bladder damage. When sold on the street it looks like a white or grainy brown powder, but it can come in a tablet form. The powder is most often snorted, although it can be injected, swallowed as a pill or by "bombing" (swallowing the powder in a cigarette paper). For harm reduction advice, check out the Loop's helpful infographic: <https://www.facebook.com/WeAreTheLoopUK/photos/a.476925732388189/2980364382044299/>

Children's Emergency Department and ru-ok? stats:

In June 2021, 14 patients aged 13 to 17 were reported to have attended A&E due to alcohol, diazepam (Valium), heroin, cocaine, MDMA, speed, LSD, cannabis and unknown substances. Each was offered an appointment with ru-ok? for support and advice on how to stay safer in the future.

Theme of the Month: Summer of 'Freedom'

On the 19th of July, festivals and nightclubs re-opened, having been closed for nearly 18 months. This is an exciting time for many people, who have missed being able to party with friends and loved ones. This is a poignant moment, and some may have felt like it was never going to happen again. For others it is anxiety provoking and stressful, feeling the pressure to party.

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There may be a temptation to try and 'make up for lost time', to 'catch up' or celebrate that little bit 'extra'. However, it is important the excitement doesn't result in taking too much and having a bad time. Or worse.

Taking too much of a drug or taking it too fast can cause the person taking it to feel unwell, make unsafe choices, be less in control and have a bad time. It is also the primary cause of drug related emergencies, which may mean needing medical help or hospitalisation.

#GoSlowStayLow. By pacing use and taking things slowly people are more likely to have **#ANightToRemember** and not a night to forget. Excitement at being back at the party could ruin the night. We advise people to stick with friends and make sure they know what each other has taken. A pre-arranged meeting point is a great idea, so if somebody gets lost or their phone dies, people know where to find them. It is also important they stay hydrated and a safe temperature – too hot or too cold can be a warning sign of overdose.

Where possible, we advise people only to take drugs around those they trust and know well. If anything were to happen to those who've chosen to drink or take drugs, it's important to be with supportive friends. Although it may feel there's pressure to take something or get drunk, it's important to remind young people that most people under 18 are not getting mashed regularly. It is safest – and often more enjoyable - not to take anything. We encourage those choosing to drink or take drugs to go at their own pace and not try to keep up with others. Individuals will respond to different drugs differently. Even a regular user could get caught out if they cut down during lockdown – what they previously used could be much too much now and have unpleasant effects. Drug purity has changed too, due to supply issues in the last year.

In the event of a drug-related emergency, always call for help. At festivals, we encourage people to look for someone who has a radio and ask them to call for medics. At nightclubs, people can go to the bar or security and ask for medical help. Elsewhere, call 999. The police do not routinely accompany ambulances to drug related emergencies. If someone could just do with some support or assistance and it is not an emergency, look for the on-site welfare area or chill out tent. It is a good idea to identify the location of these when people arrive at an event. If in a public space, such as the beach, we encourage people to assess risk on arrival and decide in the group how to avoid them. For example, not letting friends on drugs swim in the sea, staying away from cliffs and busy roads. Know the recovery position. It could save someone's life. We encourage our young people to keep it fresh in their minds.

It is important to remember that taking drugs in a nightclub or festival may be different to what our young people are used to. Our world became a lot smaller at the start of the pandemic, and many of us may not be used to crowds anymore. It's worth bearing in mind how this may affect anxiety levels. They may feel unsafe somewhere they've felt confident and safe before. Some drugs such as MDMA and psychedelics like LSD can heighten the senses and distort feelings. By starting with smaller doses, people using drugs can judge how they're feeling and reduce the likelihood of an overwhelming experience.

Covid-19 paused the party and we can't make up for lost time, but we can make sure that we enjoy and stay safe at future events. (adapted from <https://wearetheloop.org/hrcamp21>)

If you have any concerns about a young person's drug or alcohol use, contact Brighton & Hove's U18s substance use and sexual health service (ru-ok? inc DASH) which provides confidential support, advice and guidance to young people, their families, carers, friends and professionals, alongside treatment programmes for young people identifying problems arising from substance use and/or sexual health. A duty worker is available weekdays from 2 pm – 5 pm (4:30 on Fridays)
ru-ok? details: ru-ok? is on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook sharing useful information around drugs, alcohol and sexual health. Please follow us. Contact us at ru-ok? Tel: 01273 293966 or 07795 336436 or email Luci.Hammond@brighton-hove.gov.uk or RUOKDB@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

We would love your feedback!