

Nitrous Oxide Factsheet

catch
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Nitrous Oxide is also known as: Balloons, noz, laughing gas, hippie crack and nos.

It's a colourless gas that people inhale, usually via a balloon.

You may have seen these canisters lying around on the street, in fields or areas where young people gather.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

Nitrous oxide is a depressant drug, it slows down your brain and your body's responses.

The effects of the drug vary on how much you inhale, and can cause:

- Feelings of euphoria, relaxation, and calmness
- Fits of giggles and laughter (hence the term laughing gas)
- Sound distortions and hallucinations

It can also:

- Give you a severe headache, dizziness, and nausea
- Stop you thinking straight
- Cause short lived but intense feelings of paranoia

Heavy, regular use can lead to a deficiency of vitamin B12 which can cause nerve damage and some types of anaemia

THE LAW

Nitrous Oxide is a psychoactive drug covered by the 2016 Psychoactive Substances Act – this means it's illegal to give it away or sell it for the purpose of inhaling it.

If you are caught driving whilst under the influence you may receive a heavy fine, driving ban or prison sentence.

HARM REDUCTION

- It can be extremely dangerous to inhale nitrous oxide directly from the cannister – the high pressure can cause your throat to close
 - Avoid taking in an enclosed space and don't take too big a breath - If you have too much you can end up fainting, falling unconscious or suffocating from a lack of oxygen. People have died this way.
 - Avoid using in potentially dangerous places where falls could cause injury
 - Don't take with other drugs – mixing with alcohol is particularly dangerous as it increases risks associated with both substances
 - Be with people who you trust
- Where can young people get help?

If you are a young person under the age of 25, living in Surrey, and need help with your substance use, you can contact Catch22 on 01372 832905. To find out more visit: <https://www.catch-22.org.uk/services/surrey-young-peoples-substance-misuse-service/>