

WHAT TO DO

IF YOU...

- Feel a loss of energy,
- Are under a great deal of stress,
- Develop infections easily,
- Eat poorly or have no appetite, or
- Fear that you might have AIDS

AND YOU DRINK OR USE DRUGS,

- Cut down or stop.
- Don't use needles.
- Learn to "get high" without drugs.
- Try to reduce stress. Techniques include meditation, exercise, hobbies, support groups, friendships.
- Eat well and get plenty of sleep.
- Follow "safe sex" guidelines.
- Know the signs and symptoms of AIDS.
- Get regular medical check-ups.
- Seek professional help for drug and alcohol problems.

The San Francisco AIDS Foundation was established in June, 1982, to meet a number of pressing needs generated by the onset of the AIDS Epidemic. The Foundation's services include:

- **Information and Referral Services** through its San Francisco and Northern California toll-free hotlines, the Foundation provides up-to-date and accurate information on all aspects of AIDS and medical and psychological referrals to AIDS-sensitive providers.
- **Education and Literature** through its Speakers Bureau, community forum programs, health professional seminars and a wide variety of literature, the Foundation educates the populations at risk, the general population and health care providers about AIDS.
- **Direct Services for People with AIDS** through its Social Work Programs, the Foundation assists people with AIDS in accessing various social service programs.
- **Media Relations**
- **Support for Research**
- **Fundraising**
- **Government Relations**
- **Deaf Services**

Volunteers are always needed in the various programs and services of the Foundation. Training and ongoing support is provided. To volunteer your time, energy and concern, contact the Foundation today!

The San Francisco AIDS Foundation is a contract agency of the San Francisco Department of Public Health and the State of California Department of Health Services.

For AIDS-related information and referrals call the San Francisco AIDS Foundation Hotline:

863-AIDS
in San Francisco

800-FOR-AIDS
Toll Free in
Northern California

TTY (415) 864-6606

For gay-sensitive health care referral contact the
BAPHR Referral Service: **(415) 673-3189**

For reprints of this brochure, contact:
The San Francisco AIDS Foundation
54 Tenth Street
San Francisco CA 94103-1360

alcohol
drugs and
AIDS

AIDS FOUNDATION
San Francisco

WHAT'S THE CONNECTION

Text by The AIDS/Substance Abuse Task Force,
San Francisco, California

Design by Richard Roesener

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WHAT'S THE CONNECTION

Drugs and alcohol are known to cause a variety of health problems. Recent research has indicated that alcohol, as well as such street drugs as amphetamines (speed), marijuana, and nitrite inhalants (poppers), all damage the immune system, leaving the user open to infection and cancer.

The reasons for the use of drugs and alcohol are as varied as the individuals who use them. Much of this drug use may have begun innocently but progressed to a point of harm, carrying with it many health risks.

Drugs and alcohol are believed by many researchers to be significant factors in increasing personal risk for AIDS:

- Researchers believe that the probable cause of AIDS is a type of virus (called a retrovirus) which changes the structure of the cells it attacks. It may require the presence of an already damaged immune system before it can cause disease.
- Alcohol and drugs interfere with many types of medical and alternative therapies for AIDS.
- Alcohol and drugs alter the judgment of the user, who may become more prone to engage in activities which put people at high risk for AIDS.
- Alcohol and drug abuse causes stress, including sleep problems, which harms immune functioning.

The AIDS crisis has brought about a growing health awareness. For many people, this means re-evaluating their drug and alcohol use.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol abuse is one of the leading health problems in the United States. Excessive drinking causes disease in every part of the body.

- Alcohol abuse decreases white blood cell counts, causing the body to respond poorly to infection.
- Alcoholic liver disease inhibits the body's ability to form T-cells (white blood cells affected in AIDS).
- Chronic abusers of alcohol have fewer T-cells.
- Alcohol abuse is a co-factor in the development of many forms of cancer.
- Chronic abusers of alcohol tend to have poor nutritional intake, leading to a generalized state of poor health.
- Alcohol abuse interferes with the body's use of vitamins and minerals necessary to maintain a healthy immune system.

AMPHETAMINES (Speed, Crank)

Amphetamine use can lead to numerous health problems. Using contaminated needles is a known risk factor for contracting AIDS. There is also risk of injecting foreign bodies into the blood stream which may cause damage or infection.

Use of amphetamines in any form, whether injected or not, can damage many body systems, including the immune system.

- Liver damage from amphetamine use causes an overall suppression of the white blood cell count, diminishing response to infection.
- Malnutrition due to appetite suppression deprives the body of essential vitamins and nutrients, causing a general decline in health.
- Amphetamine euphoria may lead to behavior generally accepted as increasing risk for contracting AIDS.

MARIJUANA

Marijuana is a widely used drug, often believed to have few harmful affects. However, recent research has indicated that it may lower the body's ability to fight infection.

- One study has shown a decrease in antibodies circulating in the blood stream of frequent users.
- Another study of frequent users has found abnormalities in T-cells function closely resembling those found in AIDS.
- Impaired judgment may make the user more prone to engage in high risk sexual activities.

NITRITES (Poppers, Amyl)

Poppers were one of the first factors considered as a possible cause of AIDS due to their widespread use as a new sexual stimulant in the gay community. The role played by this drug in AIDS has yet to be understood.

- Some researchers believe poppers may be a co-factor in the development of AIDS.
- There is strong evidence that poppers lead to generalized suppression of the immune system.
- Some research indicates that poppers may be a co-factor in the development of Kaposi's Sarcoma.

OTHER DRUGS

Research into the effects on the immune system of drugs such as cocaine, heroin, Quaaludes, and many others is not yet available. This does not mean that these drugs are safe. Problems may stem from direct bodily harm from the drug or from impaired judgment.