

Nitrous Oxide

the facts



Nitrous Oxide might sound fun,
but the risks are not to be laughed at

What is Nitrous Oxide?

Nitrous Oxide or Laughing Gas is a colourless gas that comes in small pressurised metal canisters, often called whippits. It's called Laughing Gas as it often causes people to burst out laughing when inhaled.

As well as causing the 'giggles', Nitrous Oxide slows down messages between the brain and body and can cause accidents and serious harm.

How is it used?

The gas from the whippit is transferred to a balloon through a dispenser. The gas is then inhaled from the balloon.

How does Nitrous Oxide make you feel?

Most people will experience short lived and intense feelings of:



- the giggles
- joy and relaxation
- changes to sounds, sight and touch

You can also experience negative feelings of:



- dizziness
- headaches
- fainting or falling over
- confusion
- seeing or hearing things that aren't real



Know the Risks

Keep yourself safe

Using Nitrous Oxide can be risky.

The best way to stay safe is to not use Nitrous Oxide.

My friends are using Nitrous Oxide and it looks like a laugh.

Don't be pressurised into using drugs particularly ones you are unfamiliar with. If you do decide to use, know what the risks are and most importantly, the safest way to use.

The effects don't last very long and it can be tempting to take more and more.

Pace yourself. It can be easy to take too much and experience negative effects. Keep track of how much and how often you've inhaled.

Inhaling Nitrous Oxide from the canister or the dispenser is **very dangerous**.

Never inhale straight from the canister or dispenser.

Nitrous Oxide from a canister is so cold that it could seriously damage your throat and lungs.

Always release the gas into a balloon. Inhale small amounts from the balloon at a time. Judging a safe amount is difficult, so avoid taking a big breath in one go.

Never inhale by putting a bag or balloon over your head as it can cause suffocation.

Sharing balloons with others can pass on infections including Coronavirus (Covid-19).

Never share balloons or dispensers with others.

Mixing Nitrous Oxide with other drugs and/or alcohol increases the risk of harm.
Effects are more unpredictable and difficult to control.

Avoid mixing Nitrous Oxide with other drugs and/or alcohol.

Inhaling Nitrous Oxide can affect oxygen flow to the brain which can cause dizziness, unconsciousness or fainting. Using Nitrous Oxide can, in extreme cases, cause death.

Sit down when using to prevent falling over.
Avoid railway tracks, water or busy roads.
Don't use on your own. Make sure a mate is with you, so if something does go wrong there is someone there to get help.

Solvent gases like Nitrous Oxide can cause the heart to beat irregularly, increasing the risk of heart failure.

Avoid if you have an underlying heart condition.
Not everyone who has an underlying health condition is aware of it.

Heavy use, over a long period, has been linked to a lack of vitamin B12. This can cause nerve damage, leading to pain or tingling in the toes and fingers.

Avoid heavy and regular use.

Canisters are highly pressurised and could cause an explosion if near naked flames.

Keep canisters away from fires, candles, lighters or cigarettes.
Don't leave canister litter lying about.
Dispose of them safely.

Using in confined space is more risky.

Don't use Nitrous Oxide in cars or tents
Don't drive after using Nitrous Oxide.

What to do in an emergency:

ALWAYS

Always make sure your mobile phone is topped up and fully charged before going out.

PHONE

If someone is unconscious but breathing, and has no other injuries that would stop them being moved, place them in the recovery position and phone for an ambulance.

STAY

Stay with them to ensure they continue to breathe normally. If someone is unconscious and not breathing, call 999 and start CPR right away.

ACT QUICKLY

The quicker an ambulance is called the less likelihood there is of serious illness or death.

THE LAW

Nitrous Oxide whippets aren't illegal to possess. It is illegal though to give or sell them to someone else if they are to use them to get high.



Contact

If you're a young person in East Lothian or Midlothian and would like free and confidential support and information around alcohol and drugs contact:

MYPAS

Tolbooth Hall, 176 High Street, Dalkeith, Midlothian, EH22 1AY

Tel: 0131 454 0757

Email: enquiries@mypas.co.uk

Web: www.mypas.co.uk

Company no: 201002 Scottish charity no: SC029543

Other places you can get free and confidential information and support include:

Know the Score - 0800 587 5879 www.knowthescore.info

Talk to Frank - 0300 123 6600 www.talktofrank.com

Crew - 0131 220 3404 www.crew.scot

Re-Solv - 01785 810762 www.re-solv.org



MYPAS would like to thank Midlothian and East Lothian Drugs and Alcohol Partnership (MELDAP) for its support with the production of this leaflet.

