



NITROUS OXIDE

Laughing gas, 'hippy crack', nos

A factsheet from

DrugWise

Nitrous oxide is a gas used by dentists as a sedative and anaesthetic agent. It is also used in the catering industry and is often found in silver, pressurised whipped cream chargers.

Nitrous oxide is a depressant drug. When it is inhaled it can make people feel happy and relaxed, hence the name 'laughing gas'. It can also lead to mild euphoria, dizziness and hallucinations.

Reported side effects include headaches, nausea, and most seriously, a lack of oxygen to the brain which can cause someone to fall unconscious and/or experience heart problems.

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



The law

Ever since the Psychoactive Substances Act came into effect on 26 May 2016 it has been illegal to supply or import for human consumption.

How is it used?

Nitrous oxide is usually inhaled from a balloon that has been inflated using a whipped cream charger canister. A balloon may be passed around a group with each person taking a gulp of the gas.



Harm reduction

Solvents should not be used in enclosed spaces since there is a risk of suffocation due to lack of oxygen. Do not take too big a breath and make sure you are in a well ventilated area.

It's important not to use nitrous oxide in potentially dangerous places where falls could cause injury or death.

It is best not to drink alcohol while using nitrous oxide.

As with all drugs, it is better not to use alone. Having people you trust and who have knowledge of first aid around is always a good thing.

