LGB ALLIANCE

INFO SHEET

Chemsex

Chemsex is the use of drugs during sex, particularly three specific 'chems': methamphetamine (Crystal Meth), mephedrone (Meth) and GHB or GBL (G). Although illegal, chemsex has become common among some gay men, especially in group sex situations. It is causing deaths, transmission of infections, mental health problems and risk of prosecution.

One study identified 60 deaths of men between 2011 and 2015, mostly in inner London and 77% in private homes as a result of these drugs.[1] It showed that the number of deaths was increasing year-on-year and nothing suggests that this has changed. One study found that up to 20% of gay men from central London gyms had tried methamphetamine.

Studies have shown that men who have sex with men and take part in chemsex are four times more likely to be diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection and five times more likely to be diagnosed with HIV.[2] Chemsex seems to be associated with higher-risk-taking and lower use of condoms and PrEP.

Many gay men report falling into a cycle of using drugs for sex, increasing its frequency and amounts. The high is intense but so is the comedown which can leave users agitated and so anxious they feel unable even to leave the house. Use of the drugs is associated with long periods without sleep, paranoia and psychosis. Regular users may be prone to depression, low self-esteem, financial problems and disruption to relationships, social and work lives. If chemsex has become your only way to have sex, is taking up a lot of your time and money or affecting your physical and mental health, it is time to get help.

https://controllingchemsex.com/ takes a harm reduction approach. While some people are ready to stop using chems, others want to reduce their use, make it safer and keep their lives in balance. Drugs are crushed or sniffed but also smoked or injected. Ways to reduce harm include avoiding injecting ("slamming"), reducing the frequency and amounts, taking condoms and lube and (if injecting) your own needles and syringes. Remember to eat food and drink water regularly.

Anyone who pressures us to take drugs or promotes this as the only way to have gay sex is part of the problem. Don't allow others to decide how much you are taking. If possible, attend chemsex parties with a trusted friend and look out for each other.

Gay men's health organisations are disappearing. Organisations set up to fight HIV have turned into generic "LGBTQIA+" organisations. We need a renewal of work targeting gay and bisexual men as our health needs remain important.

Narcotics Anonymous: **https://ukna.org/**

All information on this page is based on official guidance and current law.

1. https://metro.co.uk/2017/01/14/dramatic-rise-in-deaths-linked-to-chemsex-drug-ghb-6381680/#:~:text=Researchers%20also%20found%20that%20all,those%20who%20died%20was%2037
2. https://sh24.org.uk/sexual-health/chemsex