



# Avoiding Drink and Drugs



Louise Spilsbury



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# Contents

<b>Chapter 1: What are drugs?</b>	<b>4</b>
Social drugs	6
Medicinal drugs	8
<b>Chapter 2: Different drugs</b>	<b>10</b>
Sniffing substances	12
The most dangerous drugs	14
<b>Chapter 3: All about alcohol</b>	<b>16</b>
How alcohol affects the body	18
Other risks of alcohol	20
<b>Chapter 4: How drugs affect the body</b>	<b>22</b>
Other health risks	24
Addiction	26
Overdoses and emergencies	28
<b>Chapter 5: Why do people drink and use drugs?</b>	<b>30</b>
Under pressure	32
Dealing with peer pressure	34
<b>Chapter 6: Making choices</b>	<b>36</b>
Pick your pals	38
Take care of yourself	40
Getting help	42
Happy and healthy	44
Glossary	46
Find out more	47
Index	48




# Chapter 1

## What are drugs?

A drug is any **chemical** that affects the way your body works. A drug starts to work after it has passed into your blood, and from there into your brain. When drugs are inside the brain, they can affect the messages that the brain **cells** send to each other and to the rest of the body. There are thousands of different kinds of drugs and they affect the body in different ways. Some of these drugs can help the body but others can harm it.

### LEGAL AND ILLEGAL DRUGS

Most of the drugs that scientists have developed over the years have mainly good effects, such as the aspirin people can take to cure a headache. Nonetheless, even the **legal** drugs can have bad effects if taken wrongly. The alcohol in wine and beer, the caffeine in tea and coffee and the nicotine in cigarettes are all drugs that are legal but that can have negative effects. Some drugs, such as **cocaine**, have such a serious and dangerous effect on the body that they are **illegal**. When you hear someone talking about a “drug problem”, they are usually referring to people using illegal drugs like this. Illegal drugs are not good for adults, but they are especially bad for young people because their bodies are still growing.



*Drugs come in a variety of forms.  
One of the most common is tablets.*