

## Commonly abused drugs and HIV risk - Substance Abuse, part 5

The epidemic of **opioid** abuse has put new groups of people at increased risk for HIV. This epidemic includes both prescription opioid abuse and heroin use.



Residents of rural areas and small towns used to be at low risk for HIV. As these areas are affected by the opioid epidemic, more people are becoming infected with HIV. There are often few HIV and substance abuse treatment services available to help people living in these areas.



**Cocaine** puts you at risk for getting HIV because it can cause you to make poor decisions. This can lead to risky sexual behavior. Paying for cocaine can quickly use up all your money. You may then turn to trading sex for drugs or money. This increases your HIV infection risk. Compared to nonusers, cocaine users report more recent and lifetime sexual partners. Also, cocaine users have less success with HIV prevention programs.

**Methamphetamine** or "meth" can interfere with your judgment. This increases your risk of HIV infection, both through sex and injection drug use. There is a strong link between meth use and HIV infection for men who have sex with men. Meth can also make HIV disease worse for people who have HIV.

**"Club drugs"** like Ecstasy, ketamine, and GHB can alter your judgment. With club drugs you are more likely to have unplanned and unprotected sex or to use other drugs. These behaviors increase your risk of HIV infection.

The use of the inhalant amyl nitrate, also called "**poppers**", also leads to increased HIV risk. Poppers are linked to risky sexual behaviors, illegal drug use, and sexually transmitted infections among gay and bisexual men. Poppers are also increasingly used by adolescents.

Be sure to get answers to any questions you have about HIV/AIDS. Your public health department, health care provider, and public library can help.



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