

# UNDERSTANDING RISK



## WHAT IS IT?

Drugs are highly unpredictable in their effects and risks, and that is because there are many variables that play a part. In drug education – and harm reduction – these are often referred to as the three dimensions of risk: drug, person and place.

Thinking through the three dimensions of risk provides insight into what the experience is likely to be for someone engaging in drug taking.

## DRUG

There are many factors at play relating to the drug that is being taken, including:

- What drug is it?
- How much is being taken?
- How pure/strong is it, and unless it has been tested, how do you know?
- Is anything else mixed with it?
- How is it being taken, for example, is it being smoked, swallowed, snorted, injected?
- How often is it being taken?

## PERSON

Just as with the drug, the person taking it has lots of things about them as an individual which will impact on the experience, such as:

- Are they physically well?
- Any mental health issues?
- What is their body weight, height and build?
- What is their biological sex?
- Have they taken the drug before, i.e.. do they have some tolerance?
- What are their expectations of what will happen to them?
- What is their mood like?
- Are they well rested or have they not been sleeping well?
- Is their diet healthy, and have they eaten recently?
- Are they well hydrated?
- Are they taking anything else, eg. alcohol, other drugs, medication?
- Is there anything in the person's genetics that might play a part?



## PLACE

The third dimension of risk is the place someone is in when taking something. Some of the considerations include:

- Is the person alone, or with other people? If the latter, do they know and trust them or are they strangers, and what are they doing, i.e. are they taking drugs too?
- Are they indoors or outdoors? If outdoors, what is the weather like? If indoors, is it familiar and safe, or is the vibe a bit edgy?
- How is sensory-wise, e.g. is it noisy, are there bright lights?
- Are there any hazards, for example, could they injure themselves?

For more information, go to:



<https://www.drugwise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/What-are-the-dangers-from-using-drugs.pdf>



**DSM** foundation  
The drug education charity  
[www.dsmfoundation.org.uk](http://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk)

— The —  
**Wellbeing  
Hub**  
— from Teen Tips —



[www.teentips.co.uk](http://www.teentips.co.uk)