

DIRECTIONS ACT

DIRECT NEWS



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Special points of interest:

- Poly drug use—why is it dangerous
- Treatment Support Service—who to call
- What about counselling support
- Healthy detox suggestions!
- What you need to know about drugs!
- Drugs and their effects

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Poly Drug Use—why is it dangerous? Heath Ledger's Story

Heath Ledger's accidental death was the result of a deadly cocktail of drugs included in prescription pills that are as addictive as heroin.

He died from acute intoxication by the combined effects of 6 medications including anti-anxiety, pain killers and sleeping pills. Oxycodone, Hydrocodone, Diazepam, Temazepam, Alprazolam, and Doxylamine. This lethal combination of prescription medications caused his death. The combination of these powerful depressant drugs most likely caused "poly-drug intoxication" which led to respiratory arrest. His breathing probably got slower and slower until it stopped altogether.

He had taken Diazepam (Valium) which is a widely abused drug that is highly addictive. Oxycodone and Hydrocodone are also highly addictive pain killers and are similar to morphine.

Oxycodone is a strong painkiller that has euphoric effects, lessens anxiety and gives the user a pleasant experience. It is known to cause physical and psychological dependence.

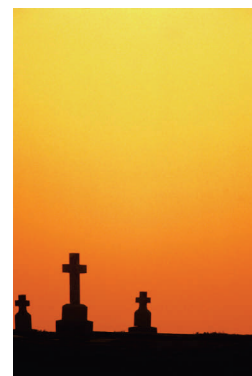
Heath Ledger's father said, "While no medications were taken in excess, we learned today the combination of doctor prescribed drugs proved lethal for our boy. Heath's accidental death serves as a caution to the hidden dangers of combining prescription medication, even at low dosage".

Many people abuse prescription drugs to obtain an intoxicant effect and not for therapeutic reasons. While illegal drugs like methamphetamine, MDMA, Cocaine, Heroin and Marijuana and date rape drugs remain in the headlines as dangerous, prescription drugs are also very widely abused drugs of addiction.

Unfortunately it is common for people to combine drugs and

not understand the dangers. Alcohol (a depressant) is commonly mixed with amphetamines (stimulants) and Cannabis (depressant/hallucinogen).

The results can be unpredictable and life threatening as it was in Heath Ledger's case. It cannot be emphasized enough how important it is to understand the dangers of taking a drug and avoid combining them with others.



Poly Drug Use — what you should know

Poly drug use is when two or more drugs are used at the same time or on the same occasion. Mixing drugs can also occur when the manufacturer combines different drugs to achieve a specific effect or save money by mixing in cheaper chemicals. This can result in users combining drugs unintentionally. The six most frequently mentioned drugs of

abuse are alcohol in combination with another drug, cocaine, heroin, marijuana, anti-anxiety drugs (benzodiazepines) and narcotic pain killers. Polydrug use often carries with it more risk than use of a single drug, due to an increase in side effects and drug synergy. Other common examples of polydrug use that result in problems for the users and for

others, include; cannabis with alcohol, ecstasy with alcohol, heroin with sedatives, and amphetamines with sedatives.

The fact that the majority of overdoses involving heroin also involve alcohol and / or benzodiazepines supports the assertion that most dependent drug users are polydrug users.

A Personal Story from Arcadia House Withdrawal Centre



‘ He prefers to self medicate, however this is becoming increasingly difficult due to “tolerance” to the substances the uses’

James* is 26 and was first admitted to Arcadia House Detox Centre in 2002. He is a poly drug user and uses Heroin, Cannabis, Alcohol, Valium and Temazepam and due to this mix of substances commenced with a medically supervised and medicated detox at the ADP Detox Unit. He followed this with a non-medicated stay at Arcadia House and continued his detox process. A medicated detox is often essential for the initial stages of detox as a combination of Alcohol and Benzodiazapams can be lethal if not managed properly. A person is at risk of severe withdrawal symptoms that can involve seizures.

James has lived a transient lifestyle over the years. With no fixed address and utilizing various male accommodation services in various cities and parts of the country. He moved around believing that changing his using environment would assist him in giving up drugs. James is also diagnosed with a psychotic illness (Schizophrenia) and has medication to control the symptoms. He believes that Cannabis usage helps ‘with the voices’. He does not take his psych medication because he doesn’t like the side affects.

He prefers to self medicate, however this is becoming increasingly difficult due to “tolerance” to the substances he uses. He needs larger amounts of the substances to get the same affect, hence the poly drug usage.

Poly drug users have complex needs and is an area which is flawed in service delivery. It is easier to assist a client who has a prominent substance choice and the detox process is more predicatable. Multiple substance use often results in unpredictable reactions and experiences. These can be difficult for the user and staff to manage. It can often require a careful balancing act to ensure the best outcome for the client. The questions are; do you detox one drug before another? Benzo reduction vs. Cannabis detox (Valium is often used in conjunction with cannabis detox to cope with the anxiety). Or do you treat the alcohol because it is possibly more accessible post detox. Which is doing more damage with the mental health issues and medication? At the end of the day the client drives the case management and we can but advise, support and recommend. There is debate over “best practice” in supporting a

client through the detox process. Many clinicians believe an out-patient treatment regime of Methadone, Buprenorphine or Naltrexone as a favoured option to ease the difficulties experienced by many people withdrawing from substance use. It is very important for each client to be fully informed of all the options and choices available, when considering withdrawing and detoxing to choose the most effective options. For example, James was most concerned about his Heroin usage. He wanted to cut down on his alcohol use but did not consider his Cannabis use as an issue as it seemed to assist in managing his psychotic illness. People who are poly drug users may not necessarily want to give up one or more of the substances. They may also not connect the dangers of mixing substances. It is important for the Alcohol and Other Drug workers to educate and support the person to make choices that ensure the most desirable outcomes. **Arcadia House** is staffed 24 hours a day each week and is available to answer any questions about withdrawal and detox options. **Call 6253 3055** or visit **www.directionsact.com**

** James is not his real name*

Poly Drug use - What are the dangers and risks?

Dangers of Poly Drug Use

There is a greater chance of harm if more than one drug is used at the same time, especially when drugs of unknown content and purity are combined. This includes mixing over-the-counter drugs, prescription drugs and illegal drugs. You cannot tell what is in a drug or its strength without testing it. Many overdoses have occurred due to users not knowing the content or purity of drugs they were using. Only a small number of overdoses



occur as a result of using one drug alone.

Polydrug use increases the risk of the following symptoms:

- * Effects on heart rate, blood pressure and temperature can be exaggerated, which can increase the chance of serious problems occurring.
- * Higher risk of overdose
- * Increased effects may also cause severe emotional and mental disturbances such as panic attacks and paranoia.

Examples of the effects of different drugs are :

- * Combining alcohol and heroin can fatally depress the heart rate and breathing resulting in death.
- * Combining amphetamines and ecstasy can result in severe dehydration, dangerously high body temperature, heart seizures and even death.
- * Combining alcohol and amphetamines can have a dangerous masking effects. This can result in fatal amounts of drugs being used.

A Personal Story from the Treatment Support Service

Simon* is a 33 years old male who has been using drugs daily for the last 10 years. Simon does not have a main drug of choice as he uses a variety of drugs on a daily basis, all for a different reasons and in a range of ways. Simon has a job that often requires him to work 60 hours a week. He uses drugs to help him work through long and tiring days and to maintain an active and personal social life. On any given day Simon will use amphetamines in the morning to get him up and going. The amphetamines help him to maintain his energy and enthusiasm for his job that can be mundane and tiring. After work Simon likes to smoke Cannabis, either alone or in a social setting with friends. He likes the edge that Cannabis gives him and he feels that it helps him to enjoy his afternoons and feel more sociable.

If Simon is at the pub or eating out for dinner, he will have a few beers, he drinks because he enjoys the taste of alcohol, the social aspect of drinking with his mates and it can help him to relax. Later in the night he will use heroin to help him to relax and release any residual tensions of the day. It also offsets the affects of the amphetamines and ensures that he will sleep that night. Simon's addictive nature means that his addictive behaviours are not limited to drug use. He enjoys playing the pokies and often spends too much money on one hit, putting himself out financially for the rest of the week. He tries to avoid the pokies, but doesn't find it easy given that his mates tend to congregate at the local pub. Simon also has an addiction to sex and will try to pursue sexual encounters even when it is not in his or the other person's best interest. This behaviour can be hard for Simon's partners to handle and

can push them away. Simon decided that he needed a break and change from his drug use patterns. He is aware that his drug use could be damaging his health and feels worn out physically and mentally. He is sick of not having an expendable income as most of it is spent on drugs and gambling. He wants a normal relationship, be able to buy a car and motorbike and eventually a house. He knows this will be near impossible with his current drug use and expenditures.

Simon contacted a Detox service and spent 10 days detoxing off all drugs. By the end of his stay he was eating better and though not sleeping well, was looking forward to falling asleep naturally and waking with more energy. He decided to move on to rehab after detox. He struggled with the constraints of rehab and after an emotional confrontation with another resident he decided to leave and go home. He quickly resumed his former drug use habits and before long decided to have another go at rehab. Simon detoxed again and left feeling great. He found a psychologist that he felt really comfortable with, someone who could help him manage his new life without drugs.

Simon has resumed his former lifestyle and is currently using drugs and working hard. Simon now understands what is involved if he should choose to change his drug use. He also has a new respect for how difficult this task might be, and just how much drug use is entrenched in his life. He knows exactly where to go and who to talk to if he should decide to change his drug use patterns. He has also formed some good supportive relationships that he can rely on if he needs some advice, help or just a good chat.

So what are the options if I have a drug problem?

It is very easy to feel confused with all the different treatment options available when trying to come off drugs. It can be very difficult to manage a drug issue while trying to deal with all the other things in your life like:

- * Housing
- * Finances
- * Work / school
- * Relationships
- * Physical and mental health

The Treatment Support Service is a holistic service, helping you to find options for many aspects of your life.

Services include;

- * Assistance to find the right kind of drug treatment to suit your individual needs.
- * Help with understanding pharmacotherapy options.
- * Help with finding and accessing rehabilitation or detox services in the ACT or interstate.
- * Information on alternative treatments such as acupuncture, herbal remedies, physical therapies.
- * Advocacy and complaints support for people accessing Alcohol and Other Drug services.
- * A non-judgmental, confidential service provided by a supportive worker.
- * Ongoing case management, counselling or single intervention.

For more information:
Contact Claudia on:
P: 6122 8000
M: 0410 428 868
E: tss@directionsact.com

Drop in at:
1 Bradley Street, Woden

* Simon is not his real name

' Simon now understands what is involved if he should choose to change his drug use'



'The Treatment Support Service can help you find options for many aspects of your life'



Different Drugs and their Effects

Drugs can be classified according to the effect they have on the central nervous system (CNS) and the way they change how a person thinks, feels or behaves. The three major classifications are depressants, stimulants and hallucinogens.

DEPRESSANTS

Depressants do not necessarily make a person feel depressed. They actually slow down the activity of the CNS and the messages going between the brain and the body. Depressants affect concentration and coordination. They slow down a person's ability to respond to unexpected situations. In small quantities they can cause a person to feel more relaxed and less inhibited.

In larger quantities they may cause drowsiness, vomiting, unconsciousness and death.

Depressant drugs include:

alcohol, barbiturates, benzodiazepines (minor tranquillisers), cannabis, GHB, opioids, (including heroin, morphine, codeine, methadone and pethidine) and some solvents and inhalants.

STIMULANTS

Stimulant drugs speed up the activity of the CNS and the messages going between the brain and the body. They can make a person feel more awake, alert, confident or energetic.

Large amounts of stimulants can over stimulate a person, causing anxiety, panic, seizures, headaches, stomach cramps, aggression and paranoia. Prolonged or

sustained use of strong stimulants can cause these effects.

Stimulant drugs include: caffeine, ephedrine, nicotine, amphetamines, cocaine and ecstasy.

HALLUCINOGENS

Hallucinogens distort a person's perception of reality. People who have taken them may see or hear things that aren't really there. Or what they see may be distorted in some way. The effects of hallucinogens vary greatly.

Hallucinogenic drugs include:

datura, ketamine, LSD, magic mushrooms, mescaline and PCP. Cannabis and ecstasy can also have hallucinogenic effects.

General Effects

The effects of any drug varies from person to person.

Drug effects depend on many factors, including;

- * the person's size, weight, metabolism and general health and wellbeing.
- * how much of the drug is taken.
- * how the drug is taken (injected, inhaled, snorted, smoked, or taken orally or anally).
- * whether a person is used to taking it (the first time a person uses a drug, they will have a very low tolerance—in general, the more often the drug is used, the less intense the effects will be
- * whether other drugs are also taken (combining drugs, **poly drug use**, can have unpredictable, unpleasant and dangerous effects).
- * the person's mood and the environ-

ment in which the drug is used (people are more likely to enjoy the experience in a comfortable atmosphere than in a threatening environment).

Withdrawal

Withdrawal symptoms differ for different types of drugs and from person to person. Generally, the symptoms of withdrawal are opposite to the effects of the drug. For example, withdrawal from depressant drugs may include restlessness, agitation and tremors. Withdrawal symptoms from stimulant drugs might include lethargy and depression.

Other withdrawal symptoms that may be experienced, include irritability, cramps, nausea, sweating and sleeping problems.

The onset, length and severity of withdrawal depends on a number of factors. These include the duration and action of the drug, how long a person has been using the drug, what other drugs have been used, the person's general health and the setting in which they are withdrawing.

Medical assistance may be needed.

Treatment is more effective if tailored to suit the individual's needs and therefore combines a variety of methods. This includes; counseling, group therapy, withdrawal/detoxing and medication. Residential and supervised home withdrawal programs are available.

* information gained from ADF 'Drugs and

Why do people use drugs?

People use drugs for many different reasons, the main ones are to have fun, be part of a group, to experiment or to manage physical and / or psychological pain. Most people use drugs because they want to feel good or different. The perceived benefits seem to outweigh the potential harms, this applies to both legal and illegal drugs. There are 5 main categories of drug use.

- * **Experimental use:** a person tries a drug once or twice out of curiosity.
- * **Recreational use:** a person chooses to use a drug for

enjoyment, particularly to enhance a mood or social occasion.

- * **Situational use:** a drug is used to cope with the demands of particular situations. For example, people may use amphetamines to maintain alertness and to gain energy.
- * **Intensive use** (also known as bingeing): a person consumes a large amount of drugs over a short period of time, and/or uses continuously over a number of days or weeks.
- * **Dependent use:** a person becomes dependent on a drug

after prolonged or heavy use over time. They feel a need to take a drug consistently in order to feel normal or to avoid uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms. It is common for people to move between categories and one stage of use does not inevitably lead to another. Harms associated with drug use can occur at all levels of use. **If someone overdoses or has an adverse reaction to a drug, it is very important to call an ambulance 000 or mobile 112**



Organisations that can help

Alcohol and Drug Program

Ph 6207 9977
Alcohol and Drug Foundation Ph 62922 2733
www.adfact.org
CAHMA (peer support)
 Ph 6279 1600
www.aivl.net.au

Ted Noffs Foundation

Ph 6123 2400
www.noffs.org.au

Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation

Ph 6231 9555
www.gugan-gulwan.com.au

Winnunga Nimmitjiah Aboriginal Health Services

Ph 6284 6222
www.winnunga.org.au

Salvation Army

Ph 6295 1256
www.salvos.org.au
The ACT Division of GPS
 The Opioid program
 Ph 6287 8099
www.actdgp.asn.au

Toora Women Inc,

Lesley's Place Ph 6241 7233
WIREDD Ph 6248 8600
www.toora.org.au

Sobering Up Shelter

Centacare Ph 6163 3711
www.centacare-canberra.org

Weed Control Support

Group Ph 6205 4515
www.health.act.gov.au

ACT Health 24 Hour Helpline

Ph 6207 9977

ReachOut!

www.reachout.com.au
The Junction Youth Health Service
 Ph 6232 2423
www.thejunction.org.au
ACT Hepatitis C Council
 Ph 6257 2911

ACThepc.org

Aids Action Council of the ACT Ph 6257 2855
www.aidsaction.org.au

Alcoholics Anonymous

Ph 6287 8600
www.aacanberra.org

Narcotics Anonymous

Ph 6249 8866
www.na.org.au

Alateen

Ph 6249 8866
www.al-anon.alateen.org



Counselling Services at DIRECTIONSACT

The clients at DIRECTIONS ACT are seen as people who are entitled and encouraged to make their own choices and values all aspects of a person's thinking, feeling, emotion and intuition.

DIRECTIONS ACT free, confidential counselling services:

Crisis counselling is available at the City Health Building and Woden from Mondays to Fridays during business hours. This drop-in service works well for clients as they can speak to a counsellor when they need to.

Family and Group Counselling

helps families develop strategies to cope with the issues of substance use which are affecting the family.

Continuing Care Counselling

is available for people who are considering their substance use issues, or considering making changes to their lives in regards to substance use. Counselling is also available for those who have recently completed detox or rehab and who are looking for strategies to prevent relapsing into past substance use habits.

Young People are supported through the Youth Support Worker to assist those who seek help and support about substance use with information, counselling and referrals into other appropriate services.

Phone 6122 8000 to speak to a counsellor.

Minimising drug related harm and promoting self respect and dignity for all

Arcadia House—Detox and Withdrawal Centre

Offering a safe, tranquil and natural detox alternative.....

For people who use alcohol and/or other drugs, it is very important to be able to obtain knowledge of health options relevant to their needs. It includes the ability to choose between and utilize services unhindered by discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice.

Arcadia House provides clients with the physical and personal resources to successfully withdraw from alcohol and other drugs.

The Arcadia House program is tailored to individual needs in a home style environment with healthy food,

friendly staff and natural therapies in a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

The Arcadia House program offers a selective, non-medicated detox program using complementary therapies, massage and exercise to relieve drug and alcohol withdrawal symptoms. The structured program enables and supports clients in a therapeutic environment.

The Program includes;

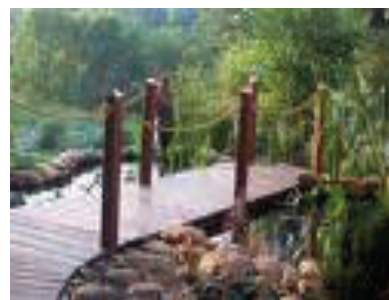
- * Group work
- * Participation in meetings, including AA NA .
- *Outdoor activities and exercise.
- * Activities, cooking and household chores.
- *Therapies such as massage and natural remedies.

All clients are assigned a case manager to

assist them in working out and achieving their desired goals and future options for their recovery.

To access admission to Arcadia House, please call 6253 3055 during office hours and have a phone assessment..

Cost is \$125.00 for 7 days.



Minimize drug related harm and promote self respect and dignity for all

DIRECTIONS ACT

DIRECTIONS ACT

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Email

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Our Mission

To promote and maximise the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities affected by Alcohol and Other Drug related harms.

To improve health, social and economic outcomes by reducing the harmful effects of illicit drug use in the ACT and region.

Aims

To implement intervention, assistance and support services to drug dependant persons, their significant others, extended families and the broader community through the optimisation of all available resources within the organisation and the community.

To utilise evidence based community education methodologies to minimise the adverse community impact of drug misuse.

Our Programs

- Counselling Services
- Needle and Syringe Program
- Community Education
- Arcadia House Detox and Withdrawal Services
- Treatment Support Service
- Support Groups
- Primary Health Care
- Resources
- Outreach and Promotional Activities



DIRECTIONS ACT

Drug
Information
Referral
Education
Counselling
Treatment
Intervention
Options
NSP
Service

Ways to feel better when detoxing from drugs

Ways to feel better when detoxing from drugs are basic good health practices.

A great way to start the day is to have a glass of warm water with half a lemon squeezed into it first thing every morning.

Here are the basics;

- * Drink 8-10 glasses of water (2 litres) throughout the day—some of this may be as herbal tea.
- * Avoid refined sugar
- * Reduce your intake of fatty foods.
- * Reduce your meat intake and eat more fish
- * Reduce your exposure to pesticides and herbicides
- * Reduce caffeine intake (ie: coffee, cola and chocolate)
- * Avoid intake of food additives, preservatives and colouring agents.
- * Keep salt intake low and potassium intake high (in vegetables and nuts).

- * Initially you might be more comfortable eating smaller meals more frequently.
- * Eat a diet with lots of vegetables and fruit to provide fibre, minerals and vitamins and energy.



It is very important to find positive reasons to improve your health and to maintain motivation, some of the following tips may help;

- * Exercise—any form helps you to feel better and supports your lymphatic system, try going for a walk, swim, a run or do some yoga or stretches every day. Avoid doing exercise late in the day or before

sleep.

- * Relaxation / meditation, take time to relax, if you've forgotten how, then purchase a relaxation or meditation tape - listen to it first to make sure the voice is one you can listen to repeatedly. Join a yoga class, go for a walk and breath deeply.

- * If you are on medication or have allergies—seek advice on what foods and supplements are compatible with your condition / medication.
- * See a doctor—it is a good idea to discuss your detox plans with your doctor to get support to manage any medical issues.

