

Frome Valley Medical Centre



If you have any questions or queries that we could help you with please visit us and we will endeavour to assist you in any way possible. We know this may be embarrassing or frightening but remember we are professionals not here to judge, not here to tell, just here to listen.



Drugs are classified into classes depending on their danger and impact on people. It's important to know what you're getting into and how it can affect you legally.

<u>Class</u>	<u>Example of drug</u>	<u>Possession</u>	<u>Supply and production</u>
A	Crack cocaine, ecstasy and LSD.	Up to 7 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both.	Up to life in prison and an unlimited fine, or both.
B	Cannabis, Amphetamines and ketamine.	Up to 5 years in prison an unlimited fine or both.	Up to 14 years in prison an unlimited fine or both.
C	Anabolic steroids and benzodiazepines.	Up to 2 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both.	Up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both.
Temporary class	Many legal highs fall into this grey area of the law and they are often made illegal with little publication.	There is no charge for possession but police can confiscate anything if they have a suspicion of the accused being a dealer.	Up to 14 years in prison an unlimited fine or both.



FRANK

0800 77 66 00 talktofrank.com

Friendly, confidential drugs advice

If you want to know more about the specific effects of one drug, please visit the talk to frank website for more information.



Legal highs

Legal highs can carry serious health risks. The chemicals they contain have in most cases never been used before in drugs for human consumption.

This means they haven't been tested to show they are safe. Users can never be certain what they are taking and what the effects might be.

Other risks:

You increase the risk to yourself if you combine alcohol with any legal or illegal drug. Legal highs can reduce your inhibitions, so you do things you wouldn't normally do. They can cause paranoia, coma, and seizures and, in rare cases, death because the chemical ingredients in a branded product can be changed without you knowing, the risks are unpredictable. Even drugs that look similar or have similar names may be of varying strengths and have different effects. If you think you're having a serious negative reaction soon after taking a legal high, or you experience problems that do not settle with a little time out, fluids and fresh air, get medical help straight away by going to the accident and emergency (A&E) department of your nearest hospital.

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If you're worried about continuing health problems after you've stopped taking the drugs making an appointment to see us. But if you think further advice would be helpful before deciding whether or not to visit us, call the FRANK drugs helpline on 0300 123 6600, or NHS 111.

Needle safety and infections

There are many risks surrounding the sharing and reuse of needles, this can transmit infectious diseases, especially blood-borne viruses such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) which leads to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. However you can also become infected with other infections and viruses such as: Gonorrhea, Herpes and syphilis.



If you are worried you may have contracted any of these infections, make an appointment with us to have blood tests performed. To see information on these infections individually ([a hyper link on the words to more information from catrin and joy's section?](#))

Smoking

Your lungs can be very badly affected by smoking. Coughs, colds, wheezing and asthma are just the start. Smoking can cause fatal diseases such as pneumonia, emphysema and lung cancer. Smoking causes 84% of deaths from lung cancer and 83% of deaths from chronic obstructive lung disease, including bronchitis. But there is some good news, that there are services put in place to help people quit smoking, if you decide to do this you will see some immediate positive effects such as:



After one month your skin will be clearer, brighter and more hydrated, after three to nine months your breathing will have improved, and you will no longer have a cough or wheeze after one year your risk of heart attack and heart disease will have fallen to about half that of a smoker.

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Stop smoking treatments

If you want to quit smoking, it's a good idea to see us because we can provide help and advice about quitting, and refer you to an NHS Stop Smoking service. These services offer the best support for people who want to give up smoking. You'll be assessed to get an idea of your level of addiction and to outline the benefits of quitting. This is also a chance to identify potential triggers, such as if you live with others who smoke or you're under stress.

We can also prescribe several different stop smoking treatments. The type prescribed will depend on your personal preference and whether you've used any before. The first of these is nicotine replacement therapy. After smoking for a while your body adapts to getting regular doses of nicotine from your cigarettes. When you stop smoking you quickly remove the nicotine in your body. Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) works by releasing nicotine steadily into your bloodstream at much lower levels than in a cigarette, without the tar, carbon monoxide and other poisonous chemicals present in tobacco smoke.

Two medications are also available on the NHS to help you stop smoking. The first of which is Varenicline works by preventing nicotine from binding to receptors (parts of your brain that respond to nicotine), which reduces the rewarding and reinforcing effects of smoking.

At the same time it gently stimulates your nicotine receptors, like nicotine does. This means it reduces the bad moods and irritability people can feel when they stop smoking.

It's really important with all medications that you set yourself a quit day. This is a day where once you reach it you promise yourself that you do everything you can to make sure you don't smoke again. Set this quit day 7-14 days after starting varenicline. The second medication is Bupropion.

Bupropion was originally designed to treat depression, but it was discovered that it also helped people quit smoking. It's not entirely clear why, but most experts believe it affects parts of the brain involved in addictive behaviour. Bupropion is prescribed as one to two tablets a day. You need to take bupropion for 7-14 days before you try to quit as the medication takes this long to reach its maximum effect. A course of treatment usually lasts seven to nine weeks.



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Dealing with addiction

If you have an addiction, you're not alone. According to the charity Action on Addiction, one in three of us are addicted to something. Addiction is defined as not having control over doing, taking or using something to the point where it could be harmful to you. Addiction is most commonly associated with gambling, drugs, alcohol and nicotine, but it's possible to be addicted to just about anything, including:

Work – workaholics are obsessed with their work to the extent that they suffer physical exhaustion. If your relationship, family and social life are suffering and you never take holidays, you may be a work addict.

Internet – as computer and mobile phone use has increased, so too have computer and internet addictions. People may spend hours each day and night surfing the internet or gaming while neglecting other aspects of their lives.



Solvents – volatile substance abuse is when you inhale substances such as glue, aerosols, petrol or lighter fuel to give you a feeling of intoxication. Solvent abuse can be fatal.

Shopping – shopping becomes an addiction when you buy things you don't need or want to achieve a buzz. This is quickly followed by feelings of guilt, shame or despair.

Addiction is a treatable condition. Whatever the addiction, there are lots of ways you can seek help. We can give you advice or contact an organization called DHI in south-Gloucestershire who specialize in addictions. They can be contacted on 01454868750. To speak to someone anonymously about any kind of addiction, you can also call the Samaritans on 08457 90 90 90.

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Alcohol

Alcohol misuse means drinking excessively - more than the recommended limits of alcohol consumption. This can lead to a number of harmful physical and psychological effects, such as alcohol poisoning, cirrhosis of the liver, inability to work and socialise and destructive behaviours, such as drink-driving. Your risk of developing problems increases with the amount of alcohol you drink.

If you visit us because you're concerned about your drinking, or you receive treatment due to an alcohol-related injury or illness, your alcohol intake may be assessed.

It's important to be truthful when answering any questions asked. The doctor or nurse is asking these questions to ensure you get the best possible advice and treatment.

How alcohol misuse is treated depends on how much alcohol a person is drinking, you will be referred to DHI who will undertake the treatment this could be:



Detoxification - involves a nurse or doctor supporting you to safely stop drinking; this can be done by helping you slowly cut down over time or by giving you medicines to prevent you experiencing withdrawal

Counselling - including self-help groups and talking therapies, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)

Medication. Medication will be prescribed to treat withdrawal symptoms that may occur, or medication will be prescribed to stop the urge of wanting to drink.

There are also charities you can contact.

- Alcoholics Anonymous - the helpline number is 0845 769 7555
- Alcohol Concern - which runs the national drink helpline (Drinkline) on 0300 123 1110
- Al-Anon - for families and friends of alcoholics (helpline 020 7403 0888)

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Gym supplements

Protein powders, available as shakes, bars and capsules, are one of the most popular muscle-building supplements.

They are legally available to buy over-the-counter as well as online. They are marketed as helping to promote your body's muscle growth, aid metabolism (helping with weight loss), help you reach peak physical performance, boost energy and fight the ageing process. A simple change in foods (such as Greek yoghurt in the morning with muesli and fruit, rather than plain breakfast cereal and milk) will help enhance the protein content of a meal. After you've taken this step, fill in the gaps with a reputable brand of protein supplement. Always read the label carefully, take the recommended serving size and don't be tempted to take far more than is necessary, as this is not supported by the current evidence.

UK drug regulator the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has warned people to be wary of buying illegal sports supplements, because they might contain dangerous ingredients that could cause kidney failure, seizures and heart problems.

An MHRA investigation found that 84 illegal products, such as energy and "muscle-gain" products, were being sold containing dangerous ingredients such as steroids, stimulants and hormones. Among products that were taken off the market was a steroid product called Celtic Dragon. This product left two men hospitalized with severe jaundice and liver damage.



If you're unsure of what to do, make an appointment and ask us to refer you to a registered dietitian for advice. Protein supplements are not recommended for children due to the lack of research into long-term effects.

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Common Myths

Cannabis is illegal and you can go to prison for possession of it. The police do arrest people caught with cannabis and it is a class B drug.

Gym supplements alone will not promote muscle growth and will cause obesity if exercise is not completed as well. The same goes for steroids.

