



Factors that Influence Drug Effects

Type of Drug

- Different types of drugs produce different responses. Each drug has a specific and intended action that is distinct from that of other drugs.
- The effects of each drug last for different amounts of time.

Purity of drug

- Drugs obtained “on the street” or from unreliable sources may contain unknown substances in unknown amounts.
- Many “look a like” and “act a like” drugs are similarly dangerous.

Method of Administration

- The manner in which drugs are taken greatly affects the speed, intensity, and duration of effects.
- Drugs which are inhaled or smoked take from 5 to 10 seconds to produce effects.
- Drugs taken by injection produce effects within 15 seconds because they enter your circulatory system directly.
- Drugs taken orally take the longest to produce effects since they have to be broken down in your stomach and intestines before entering your bloodstream.
- Some drugs can only be administered certain ways.

Dosage

- The effects of drugs vary with the amount of the drug taken.
- A small dose may show very little behavioral effects or none at all.
- At a higher dose extreme behavioral effects may occur and unconsciousness, coma, or death can occur.

Body Weight

- People who are heavier than average may be able to take greater amounts of a drug than a lighter person because the proportion of the drug in their blood is less.

Age

- Children and the elderly are often more sensitive to drugs than are others.

Attitudes

- The mental state of a person, the person's motivations, expectations, personal problems, etc. during the drug experience contributes to the effect of the drug.
- People react to what they believe is an alcoholic drink even when they haven't drunk any alcohol at all.

Tolerance

- After continuous use of certain drugs, people have to increase the dosage in order to get the desired effects.

Rates of absorption and metabolism

- Food may alter the rate at which a drug is absorbed.
- Individuals have different metabolic rates, which means some people's bodies break down food either at a slower or faster pace than other people's bodies do.
- If the drug is metabolized quickly the user may not see any effects, if its metabolized slowly it could accumulate to toxic levels.

Interactions with other drugs

- When two or more drugs are administered simultaneously the effects are often unpredictable and often dangerous.

General Health

- Any disease, allergy, or other medical problem can interfere with the body's ability to deal with unusual problems that might arise from taking drugs.