

(Poppers, Rush, Amyl, Kix)

What starts out as a quick rush can have serious long-term health effects. The heart may be pounding now, but the body will take a battering later on, especially if you over-do poppers.

Poppers come in capsules or small bottles from which users inhale the released vapour. They're popular on the dance floor and in the bedroom, often used to enhance sexual pleasure. It's not illegal to possess amyl; however it's illegal to sell, supply or import it.

The rush:

The effects that stimulate the brain (buzz or rush) and body (warm feeling) are very short-acting. Some people experience unpleasant effects and there are a number of health risks, especially from heavy or long-term use.

Inhaling immediate effects:

- Intense spacey (light-headed), dizzy, rushing sensation sometimes accompanied by giggling or a sense of being disconnected from the world
- Relaxation of muscles
- Heart-beat increases intensely
- Feeling flushed and hot
- Dizziness and light headedness
- Blurred vision, pressure or stinging feeling in eyes
- Headaches or vomiting
- A burning feeling around the mouth and nose.

Several deaths have been associated directly with the use of poppers, mostly when the person drank the fluid, or had low blood pressure or other heart problems.

Long-term effects:

Reduced resistance to infections. Amyl and Butyl Nitrate may suppress the immune system and help viruses to enter the body through dilating blood vessels. This is a serious but poorly known health risk.

Even minimal use - e.g. once a week - may put you at risk.

The body metabolises nitrites into Nitrosamines, which are thought to be one of the causes of cancer.

Harm Reduction:

No use is the safest choice.

- Inhale vapours only. Drinking can kill.
- Avoid getting on your skin as it irritates.
- Don't smoke at the same time; Rush is very flammable.
- Allow at least 3 minutes between inhalations or insufficient oxygen will not get to your brain and you could pass out (not a good look).
- Avoid mixing drugs, as the combined effects become more unpredictable and often increase health risks. It's best not to take Rush with acid (LSD), as it's easy to spin out.
- Avoid if you have heart problems or low blood pressure, breathing problems, are anaemic (a blood condition, e.g. a low level of iron), or are suffering from glaucoma (an eye condition)
- It may also alter judgement which could lead to unsafe sex, drug activity etc.
- Taking whilst on stimulants like E, speed or coke can put too much strain on the heart.
- Heavy sessions and long-term use could result in a severe headache or a psychotic episode or a stroke, coma or heart attack.
- There's a risk of transmitting HIV during unprotected penetrative sex possibly by allowing easier entry of HIV into the bloodstream and/or negative effects on the immune system.

Rush is very dangerous to take with Viagra (impotency treatment drug) because it causes dangerously low blood pressure (hypotension). There have been deaths from this combination.

We recommend that you contact the Community Alcohol and Drug Services (CADS). CADS are a free, confidential service to support people to make informed choices, and reduce the risks of their alcohol and other drug use. Contact them on 845 1818 or www.cads.org.nz.