

Risks of nitrous oxide abuse

General information

Nitrous oxide is a gas that is used, in combination with oxygen, by doctors and dentists to relax and sedate patients during their treatment.

The sale of nitrous oxide for recreational use is illegal, under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. However, it is one of the more common illegal drugs used by young people.

Nitrous oxide is sometimes called 'nos' or 'laughing gas'. For recreational use it is usually sold in small canisters known as 'whippits'.

Risks of recreational use

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of young people suffering nerve damage as a result of recreational use of nitrous oxide.

In some cases, the effects can be severe and long-lasting. Effects can include numbness, problems with muscles and walking, and urinary continence problems.

Treatment of these problems would usually require referral to a consultant neurologist. Usually recovery will be complete, although occasionally permanent disability may occur.

More information

www.talktofrank.com

www.nhs.uk/live-well/addiction-support/drug-addiction-getting-help

Further information

If you have any questions about this informa