
What is Chemsex

CHEMSEX can be explained as a culture amongst the MSM (Men who sleep with men) community to have parties, with specific drugs, for the intention of having heightened, prolonged and more extreme sex with multiple or generally casual partners

CHEMSEX means using drugs as part of your sex life, and it's most common among gay and bi men. There are typically three specific 'chems' (drugs) involved. People say these drugs make them feel less inhibited and increase pleasure.

CHEMSEX can have a negative impact on a person's sexual, physical and mental health even if they only are involved occasionally.

Drugs used in Chemsex

Methamphetamine is a stimulant. It's also known as crystal meth, crystal, meth, tina and crank. People take crystal meth by swallowing, snorting, injecting or smoking it. It makes them feel alert and aroused but can also make them feel agitated and paranoid. Methamphetamine can raise your heart rate and blood pressure which can lead to heart problems. There have also been reports of psychosis from taking methamphetamine. There is evidence of long-term mental health problems and brain damage. You can die if you overdose. It's highly addictive too.

Mephedrone is a stimulant too. It's known as meph, drone or meow meow. People usually take mephedrone by snorting it, but they also swallow, smoke and inject it too. It makes people feel alert, aroused, confident and euphoric. It can make people feel sick, anxious and paranoid too. Mephedrone can make you vomit or give you a headache. It can cause hallucinations, insomnia, reduced appetite, dizziness and sweating. It's also addictive.

GHB and GBL are sedatives. Their full names are gammahydroxybutyrate and gammabutyrolactone, and they're also known as G, gina, geebs and liquid ecstasy. GHB and GBL are usually an oily liquid that people mix with a drink and swallow. They make people feel euphoric, less inhibited and sometimes sleepy too. With GHB and GBL it's difficult to know how much of the drug you're taking so it's easy to overdose. The overdose can make you pass out and in some cases it can be fatal.

The Risks

There are many psychological and environmental reasons why people are drawn to Chemsex, but some of the risks associated with participating can be severe and affect a person's health, wellbeing and life long-term. Risks can include:

- HEALTH**
- Physical: Liver, Kidney & Lung damage, Malnutrition, Exhaustion, Poor management of long-term conditions such as HIV. Exposure to harmful STI's through increased risky behaviour.
 - Mental: Paranoia, Psychosis, Depression, Guilt and Trauma.
 - Risk of violence, rape and abuse.
 - Dependencies on drugs

SOCIAL

- Break down of relationships
- Difficulties building meaningful relationships without the inhibitions brought by drugs.
- Fear or reluctance for sober sex.
- Ostracised for criminal prosecution due to activity at a party.
- Stigma and Shame

PROFESSIONAL

- Loss of Job
 - Criminal Prosecution
-

Stopping and Reducing

By identifying the following, you can start changing behaviours.

TRIGGERS

Are you more likely to use chems when you are feeling down or at certain points of the day or week? If so, think about what you can do to occupy yourself during these times. This could be something like taking up a new activity or meeting different friends at these times.

ENVIRONMENT OR BEHAVIOUR

Is there a specific behaviour that encourage engagement in chemsex? If it is when you are drinking alcohol or taking recreational drugs, it might be worth trying to have a break from these activities.

APPS

If the apps are where you find the triggers, then block the guy, or guys, that cause the issue or delete the app and use ones where Chemsex is less prevalent or ask a trusted friend to put a child lock on.

WELLBEING

Many guys find their chem use is triggered when they are feeling down. Sometimes it is worth speaking to someone about your mental health and wellbeing.

Reducing the Risk

- Party with people you trust – plan in advance how you will look out for each other and be sure to tell someone where you are going if you leave with someone you don't know.
- Set your limits – before you get high, decide what you are prepared to do sexually and talk about which methods of protection you want to use.
- Stay aware – keep tabs on what drugs you've consumed and be aware when to stop. Don't share needles or syringes and never let someone else inject you.
- Set reminders – if you're taking PrEP to prevent HIV or need to take anti-HIV medication because you are living with HIV, use an alarm to make sure you take your pills at the right time.
- Don't play too long or too often – the longer you party the more likely you are to experience bad side effects like hallucinations. Also, the more often you have chemsex the more likely you are to become dependent on drugs and feel low or depressed when you stop taking them.

If you are using GHB/GBL think about the following:

- A Common start dose is around 0.5 -1ml
 - Its always better to take less than more
 - Always check the dose yourself
 - Use a plastic syringe to measure preferably 1ml
 - Try and wait at least 2 hours before dosing
 - Store G in a non drinking container
 - Mixing G with a soft drink is the common way to take, never take neat
-

INTERACTIONS

The chemicals contained in Antiretroviral treatments that are most commonly the cause of interactions are **Ritonavir** and **Cobicstat**. These can also be found in some HEP C treatments and the effect they have is that they can cause some drugs to remain in your system longer or amplify the effects.
