Getting Help: Psychoactive Substances

When to get immediate help
Go to the nearest hospital emergency department (call 111 if you can’t get someone to hospital) if a person shows any of the following symptoms after using a psychoactive substance:
- difficulty breathing
- feeling cut off from the world
- difficult to rouse or wake
- shaking and twitching
- nonstop vomiting
- paranoia
- fainting or loss of speech and eyesight
- chest pain
- racing heart rate
- lowered consciousness
- rapid eyeball movement
- extreme anxiety and panic
- loss of contact with reality
- seizures

What you can expect if you stop using
If you have been using psychoactive substances regularly and you stop, you are likely to experience withdrawal (also known as detox). Withdrawal can cause symptoms that could last for several weeks or even months. Most people can cope with mild withdrawal by knowing what to expect, taking extra care of themselves (such as resting and drinking water) and possibly using natural remedies to help with sleep and agitation. Most people will complete withdrawal with mild to moderate symptoms.

Common symptoms
- Restlessness
- Sleep problems
- Anxiety
- Poor concentration
- Diarrhoea
- Low appetite
- Irritability
- Low mood
- Headaches
- Mood swings
- Aches and pains
- Craving drugs
- Agitation
- Heavy sweating
- Low energy
- Vomiting
- Nausea

More extreme symptoms
- Depression
- Hallucinations
- Paranoid
- Racing heart
- Suicidal thoughts
- Anger
- Ongoing diarrhoea and vomiting
- Aggression and violence
- Confusion and memory problems

Concerns about withdrawal symptoms
If you have concerns about withdrawal symptoms contact your doctor or local hospital.

If you think a person experiencing withdrawal is having suicidal thoughts or they have a history of feeling suicidal or low mood, ring the mental health crisis service at your local hospital.

Calling Healthline
0800 611 116
If you are experiencing withdrawal and feel worried, unsafe or vulnerable, or you have concerns about someone else experiencing withdrawal, call the free, 24-hour Healthline to speak to a registered nurse.

The Healthline nurse will recommend the best care and tell you where you can go to seek help.

Managing your own withdrawal
For more information go to:

Getting help to stop using
Contact the Alcohol Drug Helpline: 0800 787 797
The Alcohol and Drug Association offers alcohol and drug information:
www.alcoholdrughelp.org.nz
To find the nearest alcohol and drug service in your region go to:
www.addictionshelp.org.nz
For more information about psychoactive substances and getting help go to
www.health.govt.nz/pshelp