

GRAB A TIP

Not All Fun and Games: How Drugs and Alcohol Can Ruin Your Sex Life

By Dudley Seth Danoff, MD, FACS

The drugging of American men is a major factor in the decline of male sexual health. Some drugs create the illusion of enhanced sexuality because they seem to take the edge off, calm you down, lower inhibitions, and produce a heightened sensitivity—but that's all it is, an illusion.

In reality, drug and alcohol abuse and addiction can cause everything from temporary erectile dysfunction to long-term impotence. To paraphrase one of Shakespeare's wisest observations: drugs might add to desire, but they just as equally take away from performance.

Before you turn to alcohol or other intoxicants to aid your sex life or for any other reason, consider the following:

1. Alcohol Impairs Erections and Reduces Pleasure

We all know the routine. You have a few drinks, and everything from your tongue to your toes loosens up. Wallflowers start to dance, the tongue-tied become verbose, and the sexually repressed become Lotharios.

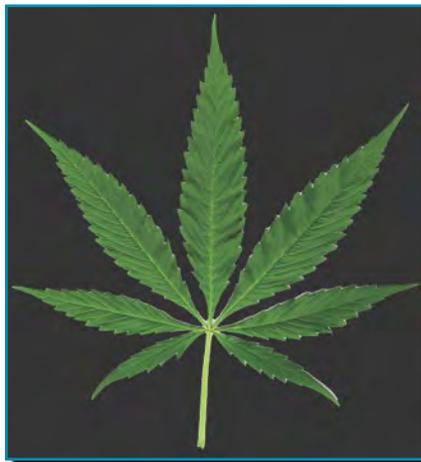
If the object of your attention has also been drinking, suddenly anything and everything becomes possible. Alcohol has become as much a part of lovemaking for some people as soft lights. There is nothing dangerous about moderate, judicious drinking. But overdoing it makes it difficult to become aroused, delays ejaculation, reduces the pleasure and intensity of orgasms, and greatly diminishes firmness of erection.

Nearly 50 percent of the chronic alcoholics I have counseled experience either



total or partial impotence. The short-term effects appear to be based on alcohol's sedative action on the central nervous system. The long-term effects include severe nerve damage that can diminish sensitivity and permanently impair the ability to get an erection.

2. Marijuana Reduces Energy and Motivation



Many patients have told me that marijuana enhances their potency. Some studies

have indicated that marijuana can, in fact, slow the ejaculatory process. In other words, an erection can be maintained for a longer period of time before orgasm. For a younger man who might be quick on the trigger, this can be perceived as "enhanced" potency.

I must recommend extreme caution about jumping to the conclusion that marijuana is an aphrodisiac. Since marijuana is a mind-altering substance, its effect on sexuality is most likely illusory.

Research shows that the negative effects of marijuana are similar to those of alcohol. There is good evidence that long-term marijuana smoking weakens overall fitness and reduces energy and motivation.

3. Cocaine Leads to Long-Term Erection Failure

When Cole Porter wrote that he doesn't get a kick from cocaine he might not have been



thinking about sex. But the message applies: where men's sexuality is concerned, cocaine is certainly no kick. In the short term, cocaine has an excitatory effect on the nervous system. It can stimulate arousal and make every sensory experience seem more intense. In the long run, though, cocaine will turn a superpotent man into a super-wimp.

Pharmacologically, cocaine decreases the reuptake of the neurotransmitter catecholamine. This chemical is essential for an adequate erection. Failure to get