

Nitrous oxide or 'laughing gas'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nitrous-oxide-ban/nitrous-oxide-ban-guidance>

Nitrous oxide is a gas used medically as an anaesthetic. Some people use it as a recreational drug, usually inhaled from a balloon to get high.

What are the health risks of inhaling nitrous oxide?

Please be aware of the following health risks:

- The gas can make people relaxed, giggly, light-headed or dizzy.
- It can also cause headaches and make some users anxious or paranoid; too much nitrous oxide can make a person faint or lose consciousness.
- Intensive, frequent use of laughing gas can lead to vitamin B12 deficiency which can cause neurological damage, according to a government report quoting several scientific studies.
- The most common early symptoms of neurological damage are tingling and numbness in the hands or feet.
- Other early symptoms of neurological damage caused by laughing gas include "skin crawling, and later, staggering, uncoordinated walk[ing], lower limb weakness, muscles stiffening or tightening, overactive or overresponsive bodily reflexes such as twitching, bladder/bowel complaints of incontinence or retention, and sexual dysfunction", according to the report.

Nitrous oxide and the Misuse of Drugs Act

As of 8th November 2023, nitrous oxide is controlled as a Class C substance under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 if it is, or is likely to be, wrongfully inhaled. Those found in unlawful possession will face either an unlimited fine, a visible community punishment or a caution – which would appear on their criminal record. Repeat serious offenders may face a prison sentence of up to two years, an unlimited fine, or both. The penalty for supply or production is up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine, or both.

<https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/nitrous-oxide#the-law>