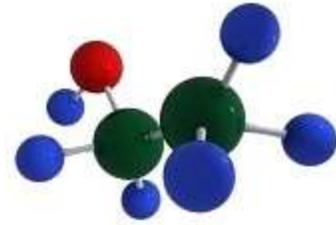


## ALCOHOL: THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE DRUG



In a new study, British experts evaluated 20 substances including alcohol, cocaine, heroin, ecstasy and marijuana, ranking them based on how destructive they are to the individual who takes them and to society as a whole. ***They found alcohol to be the most dangerous drug – even more dangerous than illegal drugs including heroin and crack cocaine.***

Researchers analyzed the drugs against 16 criteria of harm including how addictive a drug is, drug specific damage, drug related damage, morbidity, mortality, impairment of mental functioning, relationship to injury, and other criteria like environmental damage caused by the drug, its role in breaking up families and its economic costs, such as health care, social services, and prison.

Heroin, crack cocaine and methamphetamine were the most lethal to individuals. When considering their wider social effects, alcohol, heroin and crack cocaine were the deadliest. But overall, alcohol outranked all other substances, followed by heroin and crack cocaine. Marijuana, ecstasy and LSD scored lower.

The study, *Drug Harms in the UK: A Multicriteria Decision Analysis* by Professors David J Nutt, FMedSci, Leslie A. King, PhD, and Lawrence D. Phillips, PhD. on behalf of the Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs, was paid for by Britain's Centre for Crime and Justice Studies and was published online in the medical journal, *Lancet* in November of 2010.

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Experts said alcohol scored so high because it is so widely used and has devastating consequences not only for drinkers but for those around them. For instance, when drunk in excess, alcohol damages nearly all organ systems. Even one drink can double the risk of stroke according to a study reported in *Stroke: Journal of the American Heart Association*. According to a white paper published by the Council on Addictions of New York State (CANYS), alcohol is a greatly underestimated causal factor in a number of cancers, including those of the head, neck, female breast, liver, colon, and rectum, and although results are mixed - is implicated in a second group of cancers – those of the lung, pancreas, prostate, endometrium, stomach, and bladder.

Alcohol is a powerful, toxic and addictive drug. Every day alcohol kills over 350 Americans, and thousands more find themselves admitted into hospitals, psychiatric facilities, jails and prisons, or family court.

While alcoholism is the third leading disease in the nation directly affecting some 10 million individuals, it is the ***Number One Public Health Disease*** in that every alcoholic negatively affects from 5-to-7 significant others. The total social costs from alcohol abuse and alcoholism for health care, addiction treatment, crime and violence, mental/emotional illness, suicide, rape, child abuse, DWI, accidents, fires, drowning, workplace problems, school/college problems - academic underachievement, fetal alcohol syndrome, family problems, homelessness, etc., approximates \$175.9 billion a year (compared to \$114.2 billion for other drug problems and \$137 billion for smoking).

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In the U.S. Dietary Guidelines report released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 1991, it was stated that *“The Consumption of Alcohol is NOT Recommended. Alcoholic beverages supply calories but little or no nutrients... drinking them has NO net health benefits..... is the cause of many accidents.... and can lead to addiction. Their consumption is NOT recommended.”*