

# NITROUS OXIDE



## WHAT IS NITROUS OXIDE?

- Nitrous Oxide (laughing gas) is a gas that has been safely used as a mild anesthetic in combination with oxygen for over a century.
- It is classified as a "dissociative anaesthetic."
- Nitrous is legally available for over-the-counter sale, although in many states it is illegal to sell nitrous to a minor. Some states also have laws against inhaling nitrous for intoxication purposes.
- Nitrous is most commonly sold in small canisters for use in making whipped cream ("whippits"), although it can also be purchased in large tanks.

## HOW IS NITROUS USED?

- Nitrous is always inhaled.
- Users either inhale the gas directly from a tank or else dispense it first into balloons.

## WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

- A lungful of nitrous oxide results in the temporary loss of motor control and a "dissociative" psychological effect, where sensations and perceptions become disconnected.
- Users report a dreamy mental state, and may experience mild audio and visual hallucinations.
- The effects come on immediately and usually last less than a minute. Repeated inhalations of nitrous can extend and intensify the experience.

## BE CAREFUL

- Nitrous can produce an immediate loss of motor control. Stay seated if you are going to inhale nitrous. There have been many injuries and a few deaths from people who have fallen down after inhaling nitrous.
- Your brain needs oxygen! Brain damage and suffocation can result from inhaling pure nitrous for an extended period of time.
- Nitrous can be extremely cold when it comes out of the tank. Cold gas can burn the skin as well as the lips and throat. Dispensing the gas into a balloon and allowing it to warm up before inhaling it can reduce this risk.
- High pressure levels in the tank can shoot the gas out at a dangerously fast speed and damage the lungs. Again, it is safer to inhale from a balloon than from a tank.
- Nitrous can be psychologically addictive. While rare, many people have become addicted to nitrous and other dissociatives.
- The regular use of nitrous can cause long-lasting numbness in the extremities and other neurological problems.

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Promoting Health and Safety within the Rave and Nightclub Community

