

The Euro-DEN Project

Guidelines on when to call the Emergency Services 112 for unwell recreational drug users

Call 112 if ANY one of the following is present:

- Unconsciousness — if the patient does not respond to vocal commands, requires painful stimulus (e.g. pressure across the fingernails) to respond, or does not respond at all
- Significant agitation (e.g. pacing around the room) or aggression, not settling within 15 minutes
- Seizures (e.g. a convulsion similar to an epileptic fit)
- Breathing difficulties, such as fast breathing rate, not settling within 5 minutes
- Heart rate over 140 beats per minute, not settling within 5 minutes
- Temperature over 38.5°C, not settling after about 5 minutes of rest or, if no thermometer is available, if very flushed and feels very hot
- Blood pressure: Systolic ('upper pressure') over 180mmHg, or Diastolic ('lower pressure') over 110mmHg on 2 repeated blood pressure measurements
- If there are any other concerns (e.g. severe headache, chest pain)

IF IN DOUBT CALL 112!



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Practice-based guidelines for health emergencies in nightlife settings

The European Drug Emergencies Network (Euro-DEN) is a European Commission-funded project that aims to gather and analyse data on admissions to emergency departments with acute toxicity associated with the use of drugs (including new psychoactive substances). In addition, it aims to improve recognition and assessment of acute drug toxicity by training staff working in recreational settings (1).

Previous studies have shown that the management of acute drug toxicity by those working in nightlife and other recreational settings (e.g. bars, nightclubs, festivals) can be sub-optimal, as adverse effects of club drugs can be influenced by the environment in which use takes place (2).

Current guidelines for staff working in recreational settings, where they exist, are mainly focused on the physical environment of the venue and on security and legislative issues related to drugs. There is limited content related to the clinical assessment and management of drug toxicity in recreational settings.

The multi-disciplinary Euro-DEN network, in collaboration with the EMCDDA, has adapted existing UK guidelines (3, 4) to the wider European context. The guidelines cover the identification of individuals with acute drug toxicity who require further clinical assessment in emergency departments and for whom the emergency services should be called. This will enable early assessment and management by the emergency services and, where necessary, the emergency department, of those at highest risk of significant morbidity or death related to acute drug toxicity. These guidelines are not based solely on an evidence review — because of the scarcity of relevant studies — but have been developed through the participation of the experts within the group, consensus building between stakeholders across Europe and a review of existing guidelines.

The following guidelines are aimed at all staff working in recreational and nightlife settings (e.g. club medics, first aiders, bar staff, security staff, club management). The guidelines will enable staff to identify when the emergency services should be called for unwell drug users.

References

- (1) Wood, D.M., Heyerdahl, F., Yates, C.B., Dines, A.M., Giraudon, I., Hovda, K.E., Dargan, P. (2014), 'The European Drug Emergencies Network (Euro-DEN)', *Clin Toxicol (Phila)*, Apr; 52(4):239–41.
- (2) Bellis, M.A., Hughes, K., Lowey, H. (2002), 'Healthy nightclubs and recreational substance use. From a harm minimisation to a healthy settings approach', *Addict Behav.* Nov-Dec; 27(6): 1025–35.
- (3) Wood, D.M., Greene, S.L., Aldus, G., Huggett, D., Nicolaou, M., Chapman, K., et al. (2008), 'Improvement in the pre-hospital care of recreational drug users through the development of club specific ambulance referral guidelines', *Subs Abuse Treat Prev Policy* 2008; 3: 14.
- (4) London Drug and Alcohol Policy Forum. Safer Nightlife. Available from: https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/health-and-wellbeing/drugs-and-alcohol/substance-misuse-partnership/Documents/SS_LDPF_safer_nightlife.pdf [Last accessed 21st January 2015].

Disclaimer: The contents of these guidelines are to be used as a guide. They do not replace clinical judgment and are not meant to be a replacement for training and/or experience. Moreover, they do not indicate an exclusive course of action, or serve as a standard of medical care. Variations, taking individual circumstances into account, may be appropriate.