

POPPERS



WHAT ARE POPPERS?

- “Poppers” is a slang term for a class of chemicals called “alkyl nitrites” or simply “nitrites.” This class includes multiple unique compounds, including amyl nitrite, butyl nitrite, isobutyl nitrite, isopropyl nitrite, and more.
- Poppers are very prominent in queer communities, and have long been a part of queer club scenes.
- Nitrites are used medically for the treatment of angina and other heart conditions. They’re used to dilate blood vessels and allow blood to flow more easily to the heart.
- Recreationally, poppers are sold in little bottles as “video head cleaners,” “polish removers,” or “room deodorizers.” These bottles contain a liquid, but because they have a very high vapor pressure, they turn into a gas as soon as the bottle is opened or “popped.”

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

- The effects of inhaling nitrites are felt within a few seconds and last for one to four minutes, sometimes a little longer.
- Nitrites relax smooth muscle tissue around blood vessels, causing the blood vessels to dilate. This increases heart rate and causes more oxygen-rich blood to reach the brain, producing a “rush” sensation.
- Other effects include pleasurable physical sensations, a feeling of being “in the moment,” and euphoria.
- Many users report dizziness or feelings that the room is spinning. Headaches are common due to the expansion of blood vessels in the brain.
- Because poppers relax muscles in the anus and vagina, they are sometimes used during sex to facilitate penetration.

WHAT'S A TYPICAL DOSE?

- Poppers are usually inhaled by holding one nostril and gently breathing in air that’s wafted from the bottle, then holding your breath for a few seconds before exhaling.
- Many people develop a headache after 2-4 inhalations, which is a good indicator to stop.
- It’s advised to alternate nostrils between inhalations.

- You should **always waft the air** from the bottle toward your nose. Putting the bottle too close to your nose can get the liquid on your skin, causing burns.

BE CAREFUL

- Since poppers are not regulated, the exact contents of these products are not known, and they are not safety tested.
- Swallowing the liquid in the bottle is **extremely dangerous** and can be fatal. If it happens accidentally, call 911 or Poison Control. Contact with the skin can cause irritation and lesions.
- Poppers are highly flammable. Keep away from cigarettes, candles, and lighters.
- Poppers pose extra risks for pregnant people and people who have heart problems (like arrhythmias), abnormal blood pressure, a history of cerebral hemorrhaging, or anemia.
- Since both poppers and stimulants (like amphetamine or cocaine) increase heart rate, mixing them can increase the risk of overheating or heart and blood pressure related issues.
- Combining poppers and Viagra can lead to a massive drop in blood pressure, which is very dangerous and might cause the body to go into shock.

MORE HARM REDUCTION TIPS

- Poppers can affect your judgment and may increase risky sexual behavior. If you are planning on being intimate, have conversations about consent and protection *before* use whenever possible.
- To prevent spilling and evaporation, pour a small amount in a separate bottle filled with cotton, tightly seal it, and store it in a fridge.
- Each specific nitrite will have a slightly different effect and safety profile. The contents of poppers can’t be tested by anything but a lab, so be aware of the risk of getting one of the riskier nitrites. (Isobutyl nitrite, for example, was found by the EU to be possibly carcinogenic.)



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