

CHEMSEX

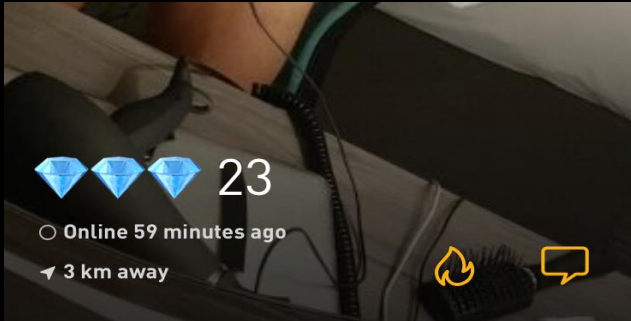
# Chemsex & Dublin

- Substances have always been used by some to facilitate sex
  - Something new about the recent trend; **Chemsex**
    - The practice of **intentionally** using certain drugs **before** or **during** sex to **increase** both **sexual pleasure** and **arousal**
- In Dublin, there can be anywhere between 20 – 30 **Chemsex parties** in a week
- Taking **Crystal Meth**, **GHB** (Tina & Gina) and **Mephedrone** during the party
- Then **Benzodiazepines**, **Cannabis** & **Ketamine** to help the come down
- Different psychology - Different name gives a different mind frame
  - E.g. Injecting **Crystal Meth**, **Mephedrone** & **Ketamine**, but calling it “**slamming**”
  - They don’t associate with “addiction” i.e. “I slam, junkies inject”



# Chemsex

- Phone apps & websites (Tindr, Blendr, Grindr, Growlr, Scruff) have made Chemsex much more visible & easier to access
- On profiles – “ParTying with Tina & Gina” could indicate that this person was hosting/looking for a sex party using “Tina” (Crystal meth) & “Gina” (G)



- **Changing geography** of partying, from a communal scene to private homes
  - Drugs like **GHB/GBL** are *replacing Ecstasy* as the drug of choice
  - The **internet** replaced *socialising* as the most common way of looking for sexual partners

# G & Sex

- GBL & GHB are consumed during:
  - Club & Circuit Parties
    - as a precursor to after-parties
  - After-parties
    - Drug cocktail, with Crystal Meth, Mephedrone, Cocaine, Viagra, Ecstasy, Cannabis, and/or Alcohol
  - Saunas, Sex clubs & Chemsex parties
    - multiple partners (average of *at least 5* in one night)
    - Risk of *unprotected consensual sex*, and even *non-consensual sex*
- Longer partying behaviour more normalised.
  - Hard to know when to “call it a night” – no risk of DJ stopping playing or the lights coming on



**DON'T  
~~GET~~  
RAPE**

# Using Technology to “Network”

## HousePRTY 20

○ Online 26 minutes ago

📍 3 km away

no 📸 no 💬



also, every time I open grindr, there's about 3 profiles called GEMTV or whatever selling the stuff

which doesn't help

well, I really like sex. And when they're high, they can't fuck 😂

18:08

GEMTV... G, Ecstasy, Meph, Tina, Viagra?

Bottom

Single

**DISGUISE YOUR APP IC**

23:59

Hey man. Partying now with friend. Going to be straight out. Do you have any contact for T? Hope question doesn't offend.

Today

Naw it doesn't. But there's a couple guys on here I know who have Tina

00:00

Great. Could you pass on my

CH 3 MS 🍬 🎉 🍷

● Online now



👹 diz-me que precisas 👹  
👹 tell me what you need 👹

👹 bloom 👹 g 👹 ecx

# Why Would People Engage in Chemsex?

sexual freedom

loneliness

internalised homophobia

better sex

longer sex

intimacy

peer pressure

community

fear of rejection

sexual shame

HIV/HCV stigma

"The drug is not the problem; the drug is the attempt to solve the problem"  
-Gabor Maté



# The Psychology of Chemsex

- **Cognitive disengagement**

- If you get rejected & you are on Mephedrone, Crystal Meth, or GHB, it doesn't matter

- **Little or no memory** of what occurred, and definitely none after he/she lost consciousness

- Use drugs to **manage negative feelings**, such as lack of confidence & self esteem, internalised guilt about sexual proclivities and stigma about their HIV status

- Drugs become used *less for fun* and more for self-medication



Bareback



Seen 24 minutes ago



22yrs

n/a

n/a

n/a

n/a

n/a

n/a

n/a

YOUNG HUNG GUYS ONLY. Btm here. Can accm now . I don't travel. Poppers, chems n BB. No answer is an answer.

238 metres away | 2 minutes away

But seriously, i want u to poz me

Plz will u?

Why?

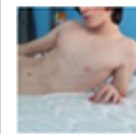
It turns me on,

# Bug Chasers

Those who seek **HIV** infection are called "**bug chasers**"



4/13/2013



(18 hrs ago)

hi sexy i don't want to sound dumb but will you poz me?



28

Online 14 minutes ago

1km away





# Research on Chemsex – Gay Men's Health Service

- Study (2015) of 486 attendees at the GMHS; 27% had engaged in Chemsex – had used at least 1 of:
  - Crystal Meth, GHB/GBL, Ketamine, Mephedrone, Cocaine, Ecstasy, New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), or Other stimulants for/during sex
- More common in 25-39 year olds (31%) vs. those in the 18-24 and 40+ age groups (20%)
- 65% had a university degree or higher education
- 58% born in Ireland
- No other significant differences by socio-demographic variables
- 86% of all respondents in MISI had used Grindr to make contact with new male sex partners over the previous 12 months

# Direct Drug-Related Harms

- Poly-drug Use

- Half of respondents had used **at least 2 drugs** the last time they had chemsex

- Injecting Drug Use

- **9%** of those engaging in chemsex had ever **injected** drugs for chemsex



- Loss of Consciousness

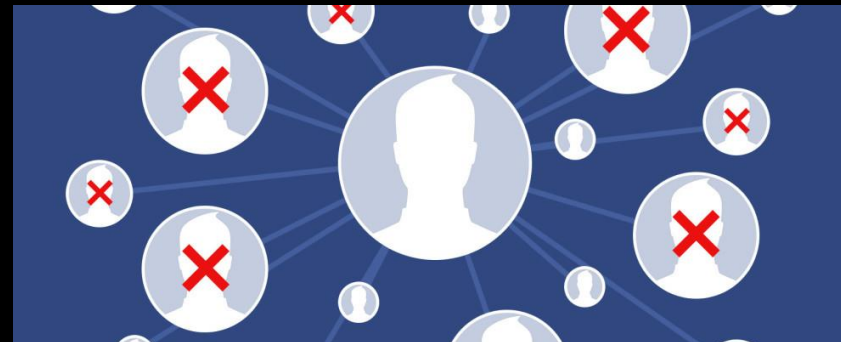
- **23%** of respondents/their partners had ever **lost consciousness** as a result of chemsex

# Reasons For Relapse

- Previously moved in **chems-using circles**
- Many liked **person they were**, “better than person I am without it”
- Withdrawal symptoms e.g. anxiety, panic attacks & insomnia lasting for several weeks – some couldn’t cope
- Some people (especially those with a history of alcohol dependence) relapsed, either on GHB or up to 2L of vodka/day
- Unable to have sex without GBL/GHB or Crystal Meth

90%

=



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50%

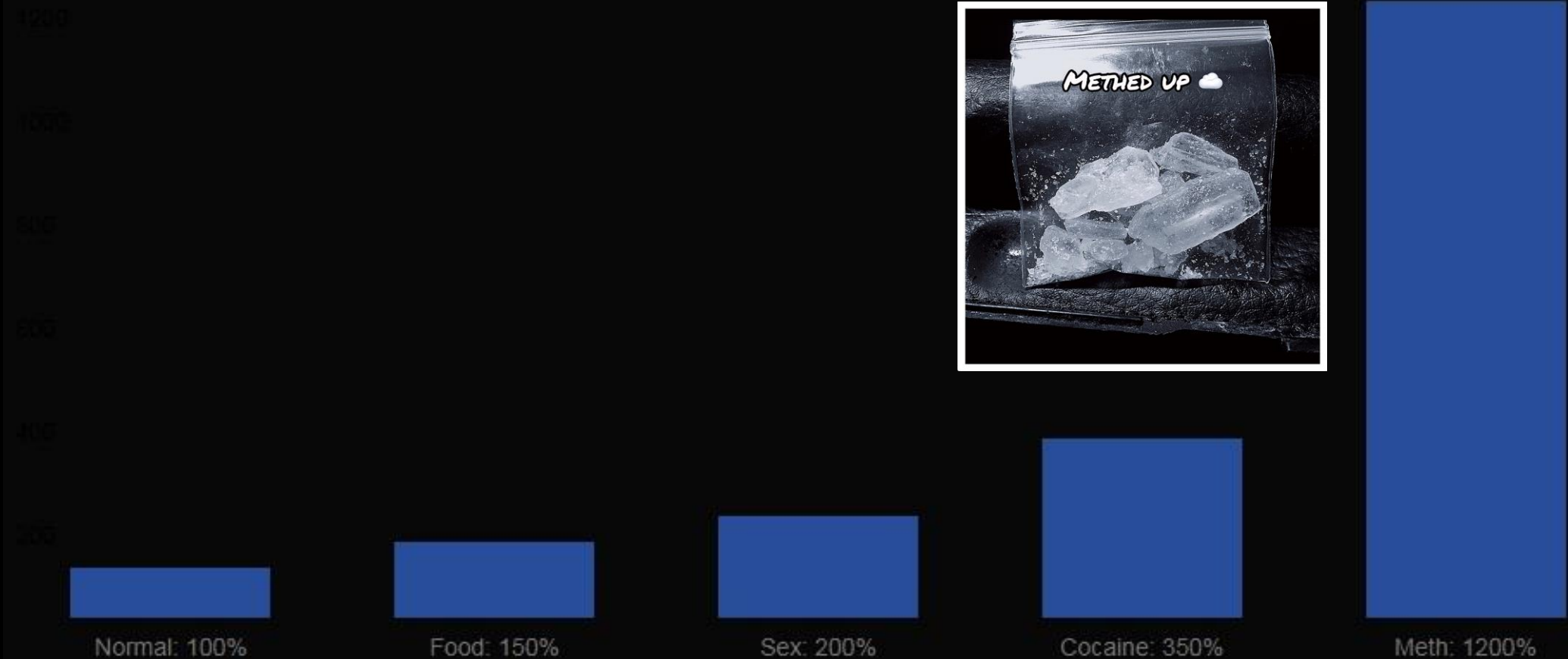
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*I want to get high  
and have sex.*



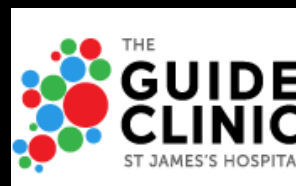
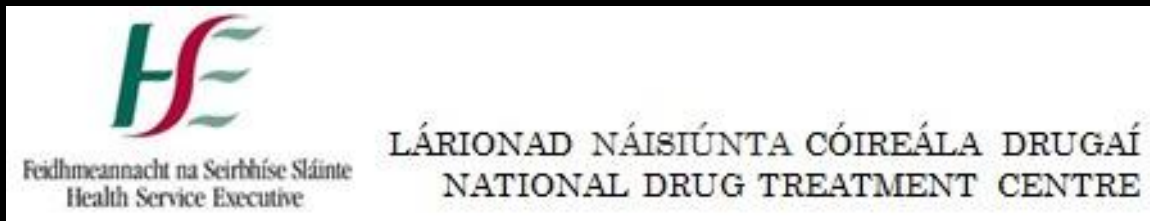
# Crystal Meth & Dopamine

## Amount of released dopamine



# The Chemsex Working Group, Ireland

- Established to address the harms associated with the increasing trend of Chemsex and associated drug use as part of the **National Outbreak Strategy 2015**
- Multisectoral collaboration of **Statutory** and **Non-Governmental** Organisations
- Main focus – **harm reduction campaigns** on GHB, Crystal Meth and other substances used in Chemsex



ARE  
YOU  
USING



also known  
as GHB, GBL,  
and Liquid E  
[drugs.ie/ghb](http://drugs.ie/ghb)

It's always safest not to take unknown or illicit drugs at all. G is addictive and it is easy to overdose on it, so if you do decide to take it,

**REMEMBER**



Always prepare  
your own G



Pre-measure  
G carefully



Use as low a dose as possible  
and wait before re-dosing



Never swig from  
the bottle



Take G  
orally



Don't mix G with  
alcohol or other drugs



Do mix with water,  
soft drinks or juice



Use with people you trust  
in a safe environment

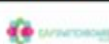
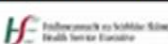


Always use condoms if using G.  
If someone 'goes under'/is  
unconscious they cannot  
consent to sex.



If someone you're with 'goes  
under'/is unconscious, put  
them in the recovery position  
and call 999. Don't assume  
they will sleep it off.

Need further information and support? Call the HSE Drugs Helpline 1800 459 459, the GMHS Outreach Team 01 669 9553, the National Drug Treatment Centre 01 648 8600 or the Rialto Community Drug Team 01 4540021



What to do if  
someone you're  
with takes too  
much G



Put them in the recovery position

If someone 'goes under'/is unconscious, they need to be put into the recovery position.

Call an ambulance (999 or 112)

If someone has passed out and you can't wake them then they need to go to hospital.

Don't be put off from calling an ambulance because you have drugs. Paramedics are not police.

Don't let anyone have sex with them

If you notice someone who isn't in control of what's happening to them, make sure you look after them so they don't end up involved in sex without knowing about it.

Emergency  
Medical Staff  
Called To  
Attend Patients  
Experiencing  
GHB/GBL  
Overdose



An overdose with GHB/GBL may be the reason for unconsciousness if the person you are attending is found unresponsive.

- The protection of airways and proper airway management is recommended because vomiting is common.
- Someone can transition from an overdose into serious withdrawals with the risk of seizures, severe agitation & rhabdomyolysis.

For treatment of withdrawal consult the Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines, 12th edition or later.

For further information on treatment intervention or detoxification please contact:

HSE National Drug Treatment Centre: 01 648 8600

HSE Helpline: 1800 459 459 / Drugs.ie



# Harm Reduction

- Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, in the UK found that *campaigns on abstinence* were **not effective** and, in some cases, **increased the risk** of people taking drugs
- **Harm reduction – Patient education:**
  - *Dosing* of G
  - *Timings*
  - Potentially *dangerous interactions* with other drugs or alcohol
  - Potential for *sexual harm*
  - *Potential for other health harms* that can arise from prolonged use or overdosing
- Encourage to reflect on whether their lifestyle is what they really wanted to maintain (*functional dependence* on substances)
  - **Reflection & contemplation** are the first big steps in *behaviour change*

# This is NOT a Singular Department Issue

- Competently addressing Chemsex is challenging, because though it may be perceived as a drug problem, it's a public health issue involving various specialties; general practice, emergency, medicine, psychiatry and addictions
  - Cultural issue associated with how people *understand & pursue sex, intimacy and relationships*
- **Drug-related interventions** need to be adapted to ensure:
  - Specific forms of high-risk behaviour are addressed
  - Treatment goals relevant to these behaviours are included
- **Harm-reduction measures** and **treatment interventions** must tackle drug use together with sexual health, mental health, physical health





# Intervention Settings – Chemsex Working Group, Ireland

- **Primary** – harm reduction advice & information on GHB/GBL
  - Clubs & Social Media, Festivals & websites
  - Outhouse & Day Programmes & Community Centres
  - Conferences & Discussion with community (HSE Communications)
  - Phone apps (**Future**)
- **Secondary** – detecting the harmful use of G
  - GUIDE Clinics & Gay Men's Health Project
  - GP Clinics
  - Regional and Local Drug Task Forces
  - Alcohol & Drugs Helpline
  - Afterparty Engagement Worker (**Future**)
- **Tertiary** – managing harmful effects, detoxification & rehabilitation
  - HSE National Drug Treatment Centre
  - Emergency Departments & Medical Wards
  - Psychiatric Outpatient Departments
  - Club Drugs Support/Peer Support Group (**Future**) – Unity (Netherlands), Dancewise (Australia), PartiSafe (Australia), DanceSafe (United States of America)

# Take Home Points & Discussion

- Despite the ban, GBL & GHB are still **inexpensive** and **accessible**.
  - GP's, Emergency Departments & GUIDE Clinics will continue to see cases of G dependence and withdrawal
- May be worth including **GHB/GBL** in **Substance History**, and asking about **Chemsex** in *Sexual History* of an assessment
- Targeted **clinic-based** and **community-based harm reduction** and **sexual health interventions** are required
  - Account specifically for the social and cultural contexts of sexualized drug use
- **GBL & GHB withdrawals are much more serious than a Benzodiazepine overdose!**