



# Hippy crack can cause vitamin deficiency making you blind, experts say

NITROUS oxide balloons – or hippy crack – can make you go blind, experts have warned.

By Harry Kemble / Published 4th August 2015



CHEAP: A box of 20 can cost as little as £10

Party-goers often inhale the dangerous gas (<http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/449536/Laughing-gas-balloons-drug-legal-nitrous-oxide-party-drug-festivals>) in nightclubs or music festivals.

Celebrities – including actress Michelle Keegan and footballer Raheem Sterling – have been snapped with balloons in hand.

But now boffins believe the gas can cause "Irreparable damage" to the eyes – and could lead to an increase in sight-loss across the country.

The legal high has been linked to 17 deaths in the UK in recent years.

Eye expert David Allamby, who works in a top London clinic, said nitrous oxide can induce vitamin B12 deficiency – which could lead to depression, hair loss and blindness.

He added: "The link between B12 deficiency and hippy crack are well established.

"B12 deficiency causes damage to the optic nerve – something known as optic neuropathy."

B12 vitamin injections could reverse the effects of hippy crack in the eyes – but "vision loss could be irreversible, especially if advanced".

Aerosol canisters of nitrous oxide are available online in Britain – marketed as whipping agents for desserts and cream.

A box of 20 canisters can cost as little as £10.



ONLINE: The equipment needed to dispense is widely available

"I'd argue that if more and more people in the UK continue to abuse this so-called legal high we could be facing a sight loss epidemic in the months and years to come," added Mr Allamby.

The stark warning comes as 18-year-old boy – Ally Calvert (<http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/455924/laughing-gas-nitrous-oxide-hippy-crack-London-Bexleyheath-legal-high-dangers>) – collapsed in a street and later died – leaving his heart-broken parents shocked.

One relative wrote on social media: "Unfortunately, regardless of where he was, or who he was with at the time, his passing was inevitable and this is the facts.

"We would please like everyone to share this to inform the world that Ally was not the 'party-goer from south east London that died from hippy crack' but in fact a beautiful, charming, hilariously funny 18-year-old baby that unfortunately passed away from an unexpected underlying heart condition."

Martyn Hooper is chairman of the Pernicious Anaemia Society – an organisation which fights a condition caused by a lack of B12.

He said: "[Nitrous Oxide] has more users than cocaine.

"Nitrous Oxide causes the user to laugh – hence its more common name "laughing gas" and it has one lasting side effect, it inactivates vitamin B12."

HAVE YOU EVER TAKEN LAUGHING GAS?



Yes

No

Powered by A small circular logo with a stylized 'H' inside.

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