

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE ABUSE/MISUSE OF NITROUS OXIDE GAS (LAUGHING GAS)**

What is **Nitrous oxide/laughing gas/happy gas**: A colorless gas that is non-flammable and has a pleasant, sweetish odor and taste.

### **Uses of nitrous oxide**

**Food Industry**; The food industry uses nitrous oxide as a foaming and mixing agent (used as an aerosol spray propellant) when making whipped cream. Additionally, it can be utilized as a food preservation gas, a meat color enhancer, a flour bleach, a freezing and chilling agent, a candy hardener, and a fruit ripening and decay inhibitor. Although this gas is utilized in the food business in a variety of ways, safety precautions should always be followed before using it on food or other products that are thought to be edible.

**Medical Use**: It is also widely used in anesthesia, emergency medicine, dentistry, and obstetrics due to its analgesic and anesthetic qualities.

**Motor Industry**: Fuel Booster

**Is Nitrous oxide safe**: Nitrous oxide is safe to use only under the proper care of a doctor. However, some people may experience side effects either during or after use.

Food grade nitrous oxide is safe for use as food additives, antioxidants, forming agents and propellants.

### **Why do people misuse Nitrous Oxide for recreational purposes:**

Taking nitrous oxide can cause

- feelings of euphoria, relaxation and calmness
- fits of giggles and laughter – hence the nickname 'laughing gas'
- sound distortions and hallucinations – when you see or hear things that aren't there

### **What are the effects of Abuse of nitrous oxide:**

Nitrous oxide is usually inhaled for the euphoric effect. Direct inhalation of the gas through canisters/balloons causes it to be ejected under high pressure and at an extremely low temperature, which can harm the throat and lungs. The risk of falling unconscious and/or suffocating from the lack of oxygen has killed many people. Several other risks **include**:

- Lowering of blood pressure
- Fainting
- Heart attack
- Vitamin B12 deficiency and anaemia
- Nerve damage due to the tingling sensation

**Prolonged recreational use of nitrous oxide** has several negative long-term effects, like:

- Memory loss
- Incontinence
- Depression
- Psychological dependence
- Psychosis(Hallucination and delusion)
- Weak immune system
- Numbness in hands and feet
- Limb spasms
- Ringing in your ears

**Is Nitrous Oxide Addictive:** it may be possible to become psychologically dependent on nitrous oxide, meaning that users develop an increased desire to keep using it despite the harm it may cause.

**Is it dangerous to mix with other substances?**

**Yes.** Every time you mix substances you take on new risks. Mixing nitrous oxide with alcohol is especially dangerous since both nitrous oxide and alcohol are sedatives hence elevated risk of respiratory depression and loss of consciousness associated with both substances can lead to an increased risk of accidents and even death.

**What actions is the FDA Taking?**

- Continuous public education and sensitization on the effects of substance abuse and misuse.
- Stakeholder engagement with all relevant Authorities to address the emerging safety concerns
- Prompt responses to complaints
- Continuous monitoring and surveillance at public places to ensure consumer safety