

Are poppers legal?

Yes, it's legal to possess and use poppers. However, supplying or giving poppers to someone under the age of 18 is not advisable, and may be illegal.

Whether or not it's legal to sell them is tricky. Under 2005 General Product Safety Regulations, it's a requirement to sell products with instructions for safe use ... which is clearly not the case for poppers. So although prosecutions are rare, strictly speaking, a retailer could be breaking the law.

Help and information

Text or WhatsApp **Re-Solv** on **07946 959930** or phone in confidence on **01785 810762** from 10am-4pm, Mon-Fri. There's more online at re-solv.org/poppers.

There's information on pretty much any drug at talktofrank.com, plus a confidential phone helpline on **0300 123 6600**, text **82111** and a live chat service.

There's practical advice at drugscience.org.uk/drugs, at drugwise.org.uk/nitrites, at www.lgbt.foundation and, for U25s, at themix.org.uk/drink-and-drugs.

Re-Solv

@resolvUK re-solv.org/healthy Helpline: 01785 810762
Please let us know if you would like this information in another format.

Poppers... the Lowdown

ALKYL NITRITES, AMYLS, LIQUID GOLD,
RAM, ROCK HARD, RUSH, THRUST...

Alkyl nitrites - 'poppers' - are stimulants that have been widely used as recreational drugs since the 1970s. They are volatile substances, sold as liquids, which give off a gas that can be inhaled at room temperature.

Inhaled nitrites are rapidly absorbed into the bloodstream and relax smooth muscle in the body. This allows blood vessels to dilate and blood pressure to drop, causing a headrush or high. They can enable or enhance sexual experience because they relax muscles in the anus and vagina.

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Are poppers dangerous?

For healthy people, the risks of using poppers are relatively low in comparison with other volatile substances and other drugs.

However, between 2010-2014 there were nine deaths in England and Wales involving poppers, six of which were due to poppers alone and involved no other substances.



Health risks

Because poppers lower blood pressure and increase heart rate they are more risky for people with heart conditions, abnormal blood pressure, anaemia or glaucoma and for those who are pregnant.

Harm reduction

- **Never swallow poppers** - they're toxic and can kill.
- **They're highly flammable** so keep them away from flames or lit cigarettes - you could get badly burned.
- **Poppers can cause chemical burns** if they come into contact with eyes or skin. If this happens, rinse with plenty of water and get medical advice.
- **Don't mix with other drugs** as the effects can be unpredictable - and even fatal when combined with drugs that affect blood pressure (e.g. Viagra).
- If you're using poppers for sex, **always use a condom**.

- **Headaches:** The most common after-effect of using poppers is headache and nausea.
- **Eye damage:** Isopropyl nitrite is being linked with a form of eye-damage, known as 'Poppers Maculopathy'. If you have any worries about your sight, please talk to your GP or optician.
- **Blood-borne viruses:** Poppers may increase the chance of tearing during sex which makes it easier for HIV or Hep C to enter the bloodstream.
- **Cancer:** All nitrites are potential carcinogens and isobutyl nitrite is a known carcinogen. Long-term, regular use of poppers may be linked with an increased risk of certain kinds of cancer.
- **Poppers and other drugs:** Mixing drugs is always going to add risk. Also, when used with poppers, any drug that affects blood pressure (including erection-inducing drugs) can cause fainting, stroke or a potentially fatal heart attack.
- **Overdosing** is uncommon but can cause organ failure due to 'methemoglobinemia' - where the blood is unable to carry oxygen around the body leading to organ failure and even death.