Drugs: A Very Short Introduction provides a non-technical account of how drugs work in the body. The 20th century saw a remarkable upsurge of research on medicinal drugs, with major advances in the treatment of bacterial and viral infections, heart disease, stomach ulcers, cancer, and mental illnesses. These, along with the introduction of the oral contraceptive, have altered all of our lives. There has also been an increase in the recreational use and abuse of drugs in the Western world. This VSI reviews both legal (alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine) and illegal drugs and discusses current ideas about why some are addictive, and whether drug laws need reform.