

The Drug Files

Ecstasy

Street names

- MDMA
- euphoria
- X
- XTC
- adam
- love drug
- lover's speed

Description

Ecstasy is a man-made, psychoactive drug. Psychoactive means that the drug alters a person's perceptions, mood, behaviour and consciousness. Ecstasy usually comes in pill form, which is taken by eating or swallowing it. Ecstasy can also be snorted, smoked or injected. Ecstasy affects the brain by acting on the neurotransmitter serotonin.

Ecstasy causes an increase in the release of serotonin, as well as blocking it from being recycled back into the cell. This is what causes the euphoric or intense happiness one feels when taking ecstasy. Because it is similar to stimulant drugs like cocaine or methamphetamine, ecstasy also causes increases in heart rate, blood pressure and body temperature. The increase in body temperature can also lead to overheating.

Origin and medical usage

Ecstasy is made illegally in labs, specifically for the illegal drug market. Because ecstasy is made in illegal labs, its contents and quality may vary. Sometimes it might contain other substances such as LSD, methamphetamine, caffeine or ketamine. As well, sometimes those drugs are passed off as ecstasy. Ecstasy has no accepted medical usage.

Short-term effects

The short-term effects of ecstasy include, but are not limited to, dilated pupils, blurred vision, sweating, anxiety, paranoia, depression, teeth grinding, jaw clenching, sleep problems, increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, dehydration, overheating, seizures, stroke and heart attack.

Long-term effects

The long-term effects of ecstasy include, but are not limited to, psychosis, confusion, death, craving for the drug, and impaired production of serotonin which affects mood,

appetite and sleep. As well, it also damages nerve endings in the brain that are important for a person's memory and thought.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal is what happens after a person stops using ecstasy. After people stop using ecstasy, they might experience high degrees of depression and anxiety. This is due to the depletion of the neurotransmitter serotonin that ecstasy causes. As well, withdrawal from ecstasy may also include sleeplessness, panic attacks, agitation, psychosis and paranoid delusions.

Legal status

Having ecstasy in your possession is a criminal offence. Trafficking it, having it for the purpose of trafficking, producing it, or importing and exporting it are all criminal offences.

Signs that a person may be using

Signs of ecstasy abuse may include, but are not limited to, mood swings, change in sleep patterns, change in friends, loss of interest in hobbies, dehydration, teeth clenching, sore jaw, change in school/work performance, and possession of drug paraphernalia such as pacifiers, candy necklaces, surgical masks, mentholated rub and glow sticks.