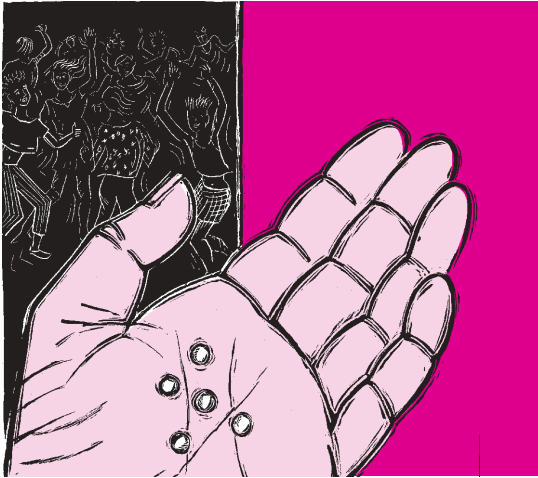


Ecstasy



What is MDMA ('ecstasy')

Methylene DioxyMethAmphetamine (MDMA) – usually called 'ecstasy' – is a drug made from different chemicals. It can contain both amphetamines and some hallucinogens. Amphetamines are stimulant drugs, which means they speed up the brain and the central nervous system. Hallucinogens are drugs that can cause people to see, hear, feel or smell things that do not exist (to have 'hallucinations').

Other names for ecstasy include 'E', 'eccey' ...

Forms of ecstasy

Ecstasy is usually made illegally and is sold as small tablets in various sizes and colours. It can also come in powder form to be inhaled through the nose ('snorted'). Rarely, some people inject ecstasy.

People who make ecstasy often mix or 'cut' the substance with other things to make the drug go further. Some substances in the tablet or powder can have unpleasant or harmful effects. It is difficult to tell what the drug actually contains.

Effects of ecstasy

What ecstasy does to you depends on:

- how much you take
- your height and weight
- your general health
- your mood
- your past experience with ecstasy
- whether you use ecstasy on its own or with other drugs
- whether you use alone or with others, at home or at a party, etc.

Small amounts

When you take a small amount of ecstasy, the effects can start within an hour and last up to about six hours. Some effects may continue for up to 32 hours.

You may feel:

- very good and confident
- close or affectionate to other people
- anxious
- paranoid (fear that others want to hurt you).





Effects on your body may include:

- your heart beats faster
- your blood pressure rises
- your body temperature rises
- you sweat more
- your body loses moisture (dehydration)
- you grind your teeth or clench your jaw
- you feel sick in the stomach (nausea).



Large amounts

If you take a large amount of ecstasy you might:

- see, smell, hear or feel things that are not there (have hallucinations)
- feel as though you are floating
- behave strangely – do or say things you normally would not
- have a fit
- vomit.

There is some evidence that you can have a 'hangover' effect after the effects of ecstasy have worn off. Symptoms of this include

- not being hungry
- sleep problems
- feeling depressed
- muscle aches
- finding it hard to concentrate.

Longer term effects

Not much is known about the effects of using ecstasy often for a long time. Long term effects may include damage to some of the body's major organs (liver, heart, brain).

If you use ecstasy often for a long time you may also develop a 'tolerance' to the drug. Tolerance means that you must take more of the drug to get the same effects you used to have with smaller amounts. It appears that the more ecstasy you use, the more unpleasant effects and fewer pleasant effects you feel.

Overdose and bad reactions

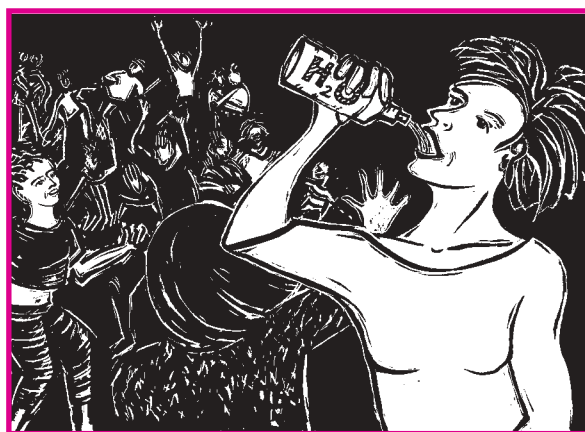
Overdose of ecstasy, or a bad reaction to ecstasy, can happen to anyone.

When a person overdoses, it may cause:

- very high blood pressure
- fast heartbeat
- very high body temperature.

Some people have died after having a very bad reaction to ecstasy. These deaths are often caused by the body overheating and losing moisture (dehydrating).

To prevent dehydration it is important to keep sipping water. Doctors recommend that you drink 500ml per hour if you are moving around (eg dancing), and 250ml per hour if you are not moving around.





Mixing ecstasy with other drugs

People who use ecstasy sometimes take other drugs at the same time. Sometimes they do this to increase the pleasurable effects – eg at a party. Sometimes they use other drugs at the same time to cope with some of the things ecstasy does to the body. Some people take drug such as minor tranquillisers, alcohol or marijuana to help them sleep.

Not much is known about the effects of mixing other drugs with ecstasy, however some combinations are dangerous. Taking amphetamines ('speed') or cocaine at the same time increases the effects these drugs have on the heart and may increase anxiety and paranoia. Taking other hallucinogens with ecstasy can cause psychosis – a serious psychological problem where you hear voices, imagine things, or fear that others want to hurt you.

Ecstasy and pregnancy

Most drugs have some effect on the unborn baby if the mother uses them while pregnant. Little is known about the effects of ecstasy on an unborn child, or the long-term effects on the child as it grows.

Ecstasy and the law

Using ecstasy is illegal. If you use, sell or give ecstasy to someone else and get caught, you could face substantial fines and penalties including a prison sentence.

Ecstasy and driving

Ecstasy can make you feel more confident when you drive. This can make you take dangerous risks and have accidents. It is illegal to drive under the influence of drugs, including ecstasy. Penalties include losing your licence, a fine and/or jail.