



DRUGS

The real facts

Ecstasy

(E, Ex, E n C, eccy, MDMA, XTC, eggs, pingers, disco biscuits, pills)

Ecstasy is the common street name for Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA). Basically a stimulant with hallucinogenic properties, ecstasy most often comes in pill form (hence the creative nickname “pills”) in a multitude of colours differentiated by “stamps”. Usually swallowed, E can also be crushed or snorted.

WHAT IT DOES:

The stimulants in ecstasy speed up the central nervous system, while any hallucinogens in the drug simultaneously affect perception. MDMA reduces inhibitions and causes users to become more alert, affectionate and energetic. Ecstasy starts to “come on” within 20 minutes of taking it, producing a euphoric rush that peaks after another hour or so. Effects can last up to eight hours, followed by a comedown which may be accompanied by fatigue and irritation. These effects are intensified if use is combined with other drugs, including alcohol.

The effects and toxicity of each pill are unpredictable, making overdose a real possibility



SHORT TERM:

Ecstasy increases blood pressure and pulse rate, and raises body temperature. The user loses appetite and sweats a lot, maybe even vomits. Some people can overheat, while side effects such as involuntary jaw clenching, teeth grinding and dilated pupils are common, as is anxiety and insomnia during the comedown. Taking a pill in a hot, humid environment (like a rave party or a mosh pit) can cause dehydration, and although rare, heart failure and death. There's also well-known cases of people over-hydrating and suffering water-intoxication, leading to a swelling of the brain.



LONG TERM:

While inconclusive at this stage, mounting evidence suggests repeated use of ecstasy acts as a neurotoxin to the brain. Heavy users report symptoms of depression (such as lethargy and mood swings), decreased concentration skills and memory damage. This is because the serotonin in the brain is reduced by ecstasy use. Animal studies indicate that this serotonin depletion can be long-lasting (up to three years) and may even be permanent.

BOTTOM LINE:

Like any illicit drug that is manufactured in crude backyard labs, there is not much in the way of quality control. While the active ingredient in ecstasy is meant to be MDMA, most pills don't actually contain it. Why? Well, it's difficult to gain access to the base chemicals required to manufacture and it is tricky to synthesise chemically. Most pill-makers are using unsophisticated equipment and aren't averse to cutting costs wherever possible.

Keep in mind, no matter what your dealer or mate who sold you the pills might think or say, it is very doubtful even he or she really knows the origins of the merchandise, let alone be qualified to vouch for their quality. Usually, they're just repeating what they've been told from whoever gave them the pills. What that all means

is, instead of buying MDMA, you're more likely to be scoring a cocktail of methamphetamine and other synthetic hallucinogens, including Paramethoxyamphetamines (PMA). Other cheap ingredients used to pad out ecstasy pills can include caffeine, ketamine (a horse tranquiliser), paracetamol and ibuprofen.



Water intake needs to be actively managed when ecstasy is consumed – drinking too much can be just as dangerous as too little

■ PMA – is an amphetamine-type drug with both stimulant and hallucinogenic properties and is sometimes sold as or found in ecstasy. Slower acting, but stronger than MDMA, people often think their pills are “duds” and take a second one, then they OD. There have been a number of fatalities recorded due to it.

■ An oil called saffrole, extracted from the roots, bark and fruit of sassafras plants is used to make MDMA. Use of sassafras in humans has been known to cause permanent liver damage and cancer.

■ From 2000-2004, the National Coronial Information System recorded 112 ecstasy-related fatalities, with the drug itself the primary cause of death in 46 per cent of them.

■ Serotonin syndrome can result from using ecstasy while on antidepressants, or from an overdose. Symptoms include agitation, headache, confusion, heart arrhythmias, muscle twitching and, in extreme cases, coma and death.

ICE

(meth, crystal meth, d-meth, shabu, tina, glass)

Ice is the street handle for crystal methamphetamine hydrochloride, which now accounts for 90 per cent of all methamphetamine seized by police in Australia since the mid-'90s. Generally coming as a crystalline powder or in colourless "rocks", ice can be smoked, snorted or injected.

WHAT IT DOES:

The intense "high" or "rush" experienced from taking ice can last up to 12 hours, depending on how many times it is consumed. Users experience feelings of exhilaration and arousal. The drug works by flooding the brain's receptors with monoamines. With repeated use, these receptors are killed off, so that the user is unable to feel pleasure at all without more ice. Hence its highly addictive nature, both physiologically and psychologically.

SHORT TERM:

Increased heart rate and breathing, hypertension, circulatory and heart problems. It increases libido, so users are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour resulting in an increased risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

LONG TERM:

Over time, ice literally ages people. Injecting it causes scarring, abscesses, vein damage and increases the risk of blood-borne pathogens. Heavy users suffer damaged teeth, skin lesions, malnutrition, reduced lung function and general aches, pains and cramping. Aside from the risk of stroke, its also been shown to affect mental health and

cognitive function – ice addicts suffer paranoia, hallucinations, memory loss, sleep deprivation and psychosis.

BOTTOM LINE:

Ice is one of the worst drugs out there. In terms of social impact, access to the drug becomes the prevalent, overriding priority for any ice addict, and they often become aggressive and violent, alienating their families and friends.

■ Toxic gasses produced during meth production include hydrogen chloride, hydrochloric acid, ammonia and phosphine – all highly poisonous to humans.



Marijuana (Cannabis)

(pot, grass, weed, dope, reefer, joint, spliff, ya(r)ndi, rope, mull, cone, skunk, bhang, ganja, hash, chronic)

The Cannabis plant produces three different products. Marijuana is the leaf and flowering head of the female plant and contains the psychoactive substance delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Cannabis plants also produce hash which comes in small coloured blocks (ranging from yellow to black) and hash oil. The most common form of consuming the drug in Australia is smoking the dried leaves and flower buds of the plant in either joints or bongs.

WHAT IT DOES:

THC is absorbed through the lungs (or stomach) into the bloodstream and taken to the brain, where it floods the receptors with the brain's reward chemicals. In general, smoking cannabis gives the user a relaxed effect. It also increases appetite, colloquially known as getting the "munchies".

SHORT TERM:

Difficulty in concentration, impaired co-ordination, bloodshot eyes and dryness of the mouth.

Research indicates men who consume large amounts of cannabis have difficulties in the bedroom, with many not being able to achieve fulfilment*



Despite the fact that many believe teenagers are "all smoking dope", four in five young Australians (14-19) have NEVER used it**

LONG TERM:

Respiratory diseases, smoking-related cancers and low sperm count and even lower sex drive. Psychological dependence on the drug leads to increased irritability, memory loss, emotional imbalance, lack of motivation, paranoia and anxiety attacks, and there's also a link to psychosis and schizophrenia in heavy pot smokers. There can be social implications as well — such as relationship problems with family and friends. Unemployment has also been linked directly to marijuana abuse.



BOTTOM LINE:

Like any form of inhaling what is essentially burnt carbon, smoking weed is basically bad for you. And because much of the ganja sold nowadays is grown hydroponically, there is anecdotal evidence of a high concentration of toxic chemicals still in the plant when smoked.

**Source: 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS).

Physical impacts

Long-term potheads may suffer asthma, bronchitis, cancers of the mouth, throat and lungs, poor concentration, damaged memory, learning difficulties and potentially mental disorders.

Social effects

Long-term marijuana smokers are also less likely to finish school, TAFE or uni, and unemployment has been linked directly to its abuse. Long-term users can also experience relationship issues with family and friends.

Dope and Drive

Recent research published by the National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre (NCPIC) shows that driving while stoned can increase your chances of having an accident by 300 per cent.

Marijuana and the law

Daydreaming about a tropical holiday in Phuket? Be warned: a conviction with marijuana or any type of drug could put your holiday plans on hold indefinitely. "If you get a conviction with cannabis, it will prevent you travelling to a lot of countries," says Dennis Young, Executive Director of DRUG ARM in Brisbane. "It can also impact your future options for study and work. A lot of people just don't understand or think about the long-term legal ramifications."

Cocaine

(coke, snow, Charlie) (crack cocaine: crack, rock, base, sugar block, freebase)

Cocaine is a stimulant that comes in a white powder form. Usually snorted, it is also injected, swallowed or rubbed into the gums.

WHAT IT DOES:

Dependent upon quality and purity, all three forms of cocaine provide an intense, short-lived rush caused by the release of a neurochemical called dopamine. Aside from the unusual feelings of arousal, users feel overly confident and talkative.

SHORT TERM:

Increased heart rate, agitation, paranoia and hallucinations, muscle spasms and vomiting. Bingeing on cocaine over several hours or days leads to a “crash” (ie. depression and lethargy).



LONG TERM:

Cocaine psychosis – characterised by violent, aggressive behaviour and paranoid delusions – as well as sleeping disorders, sexual dysfunction, strokes, convulsions and kidney failure. Also, snorting the drug damages the nasal membranes which can eventually lead to the collapse of the nose's septum. Injecting it will cause tissue damage.

BOTTOM LINE:

Whatever your source claims, purity of coke in Australia is very low compared with some other countries, so local supply is invariably “cut” with other drugs such as speed, meth and ecstasy powder.

The combination of cocaine and alcohol produces a chemical called cocaethylene, which is more toxic to the system than taking either drug by itself

Speed

(whiz, point, zip, go-ee, snow, gas, pure, eve, gogo)

Speed is an amphetamine. It generally comes in an off-white/yellowy powder, but can be pink or even brown – ranging from very fine to quite coarse – or as a viscous liquid in capsules. The drug can be swallowed, smoked, snorted, injected or taken rectally.

WHAT IT DOES:

As with all amphetamines, speed gives an intense rush after taking it. Increased energy, suppressed appetite and alertness are normal – mainly because the drug acts to accelerate the messages between the brain and the body. Consequently, breathing and heart rate increase, as does blood pressure.

SHORT TERM:

Excessive sweating, overheating, blurred vision, headaches, teeth grinding, jaw clenching, nausea and diarrhoea.

LONG TERM:

Like ice, long-term use ages the user considerably and will lead to dental degradation, heart problems, weight loss, potential stroke and a high risk of



“Speed psychosis” is common with any overdose of amphetamines and closely resembles paranoid schizophrenia

addiction. As well as suffering decreased emotional control and delusional or compulsive behaviour, dependent users can be violent and abusive, and the drug is blamed for destroying many families and friendships.

BOTTOM LINE:

Speed is a particularly “dirty” drug, cut or mixed with any number of other drugs and even detergents to increase profits. Use it over the long term and you’ll look haggard, get bad skin, ruin your teeth and may become irrational, aggressive and even violent.

GHB

(G, fantasy, liquid E, grievous bodily harm (GBH))

Gamma-hydroxybutyrate or GHB is a drug commonly found in the dance scene and is sometimes referred to as liquid ecstasy due to its stimulating, euphoric and supposed aphrodisiac qualities. Chemically-speaking, however, it is not related to MDMA at all. Mildly salty in flavour, it is colourless and odorless.



WHAT IT DOES:

Originally developed as a general anaesthetic, the overall effect is as a relaxant. Users experience reduced inhibition and a general drowsiness. Overdosing on it can result in unconsciousness, convulsions and vomiting, while mixing it with alcohol is particularly dangerous and can lead to complete respiratory failure, cardiac arrest and death. Worse, the drug can be physically and psychologically addictive – withdrawal causes insomnia, anxiety, sensitivity to light and loud noise, and dulling of mental responses.

BOTTOM LINE:

The main risk to GHB users is overdose, resulting in death. Despite assurances from the supplier, you will have no idea of any given batch's varying strength or dilution, so ascertaining exactly what a "safe" dose is very difficult. Not worth the risk.

When mixed with alcohol, GHB can intoxicate quickly — this is the reason why it is often implicated in "drink-spiking"

Depressants

(benzos, tranks, serries, mandies, sleepers)

Otherwise known as "downers", depressants act to slow or reduce the function of the brain and body. Mainly used as prescription medicines, they've also become popular as "illicits" or mood-altering substances. They can cause anything from feelings of relaxation and mild contentment, to sedation and total blackout.

WHAT THEY DO:

Depressants can act as an anaesthetic to the central nervous system, reducing feelings of anxiousness, stress or paranoia. They also relieve insomnia and relax the body's muscles. Often, users report their mood improves and they experience feelings of being more sociable. In terms of the drug scene, depressants can be used as a crude "antidote" to overcome symptoms of withdrawal or "comedown" from taking other illicit stimulants.

SHORT TERM:

Dizziness, confusion, slurred speech, shallow breathing, impaired coordination and judgment, and low blood pressure. Self-medicating with depressants while under the influence of other drugs is dangerous, it can lead to respiratory arrest or even death.

LONG TERM:

Many depressants or barbiturates are also addictive if taken regularly, and withdrawal symptoms include sleeplessness, panic attacks and anxiety.

BOTTOM LINE:

They're meant to be prescribed by a doctor for specific reasons and not to come down off other drugs. If you're using downers just to come off other drugs, it's better to just sleep it off. Take too many, or with the wrong cocktails of drugs, and you risk coma or death.

Mixed with alcohol, depressants lower your respiratory rate to the point you can actually stop breathing



Need help?

NATIONAL DRUGS CAMPAIGN

1800 250 015 (freecall)

www.australia.gov.au/drugs

For information about the campaign or to find out more about information and support services in your State/Territory.

ALCOHOL INFORMATION

www.alcohol.gov.au

The Australian Government's national alcohol information site, created by the Department of Health and Ageing.

THE NATIONAL CANNABIS PREVENTION AND INFORMATION CENTRE (NCPIC)

1800 304 050 (freecall)

www.ncpic.org.au

The National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre (NCPIC) aims to reduce the use of cannabis in Australia by preventing uptake and providing the community with evidence-based information and interventions.

TED NOFFS FOUNDATION

1800 151 045 (freecall)

www.noffs.org.au

Providing essential services for young people and their families who are experiencing drug and alcohol problems and related trauma.

TURNING POINT

1800 888 236 (freecall)

www.turningpoint.org.au

Turning Point strives to promote and maximise the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities living with and affected by alcohol and other drug-related harms.

AUSTRALIAN DRUG FOUNDATION (ADF)

www.adf.org.au

Comprehensive information on drugs, including latest research, fact sheets, updates on conferences and news, government policy and more.

AUSTRALIAN DRUG INFORMATION NETWORK (ADIN)

www.adin.com.au

ADIN provides easy access to more than 1200 professionally reviewed websites and links to drug and alcohol agencies — from small regional groups to nationwide organisations.

DRUG ARM

1300 656 800

www.drugarm.com.au

DRUG ARM Australasia is a non-government, non-profit organisation committed to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle without the use of illicit drugs.

FAMILY DRUG SUPPORT

1300 368 186 (local call)

www.fds.org.au

An organisation for those who need help with someone they love. It's made up of volunteers who've experienced first-hand the trauma of having family members with drug problems.

BEACON FOUNDATION

www.beaconfoundation.net

The Beacon Foundation is a national not-for-profit organisation that seeks to influence the attitudes and culture of Australians so that each young person develops an independent will to achieve personal success for themselves and their community.

KIDSHelp LINE

1800 551 800 (freecall)

www.kidshelp.com.au

A national phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years. It's free, anonymous and completely confidential.

LIFELINE

13 11 14 (local call)

www.lifeline.org.au

A national 24-hour phone counselling service there to help you through any problem, no matter how big or small.

OXYGEN

www.oxygen.org.au

OxyGen encourages healthy lifestyle choices and provides interactive activities and information about tobacco for young people.

REACH OUT

www.reachout.com

A place online where you can find the information you need about mental health issues and some space to chill out. Reach out. Find out. Move on.

MOODGYM

www.moodgym.anu.edu.au

MoodGym is an innovative, interactive web program designed to prevent and decrease depressive symptoms. It was designed for young people but is helpful for people of all ages.

BEYONDBLUE

www.beyondblue.org.au

The national depression initiative. Opening our eyes to depression throughout Australia.

HEADSPACE

www.headspace.org.au

headspace provides mental and health wellbeing support, information and services to young people and their families across Australia.

NATIONAL RELAY SERVICE

24-hour relay call numbers TTY/Voice 13 36 77, Speak and Listen (SSR) 1300 555 727

The National Relay Service is an Australia-wide telephone access service provided for people who are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment.

DON'T FORGET THAT IF YOU USE A MOBILE PHONE TO CALL THE NUMBERS LISTED ABOVE, YOU'LL BE CHARGED MOBILE RATES

Getting help

HEADSPACE

www.headspace.org.au

THE NATIONAL CANNABIS PREVENTION AND INFORMATION CENTRE (NCPIC)

1800 304 050 (freecall)

www.ncpic.org.au

TED NOFFS FOUNDATION

1800 151 045 (freecall)

www.noffs.org.au

TURNING POINT

1800 888 236 (freecall)

www.turningpoint.org.au

MOODGYM

www.moodgym.anu.edu.au

BEACON FOUNDATION

www.beaconfoundation.net



Australian Government

NATIONAL DRUGS CAMPAIGN

Authorised by the Australian Government, Capital Hill, Canberra.

**MADE USING DRAIN CLEANER,
BATTERY ACID OR EVEN HAIR BLEACH.
THEN POPPED IN YOUR MOUTH.**

ECSTASY. FACE FACTS.



For help or information, call 1800 250 015
or visit australia.gov.au/drugs

**NATIONAL DRUGS CAMPAIGN
PELOTON BLOOD COVENANT**

Authorised by the Australian Government, Capital Hill, Canberra.



Australian Government