



What is ecstasy?

Ecstasy is a stimulant (it increases a person's alertness and energy) that can cause hallucinations, and commonly contains the drug methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA).

What does it look like?

Ecstasy usually comes as a tablet, which can be in different colours or sizes, although there are some forms that are capsules, a powder, or crystal. Sometimes a drug sold as ecstasy may contain other substances that are not MDMA, such as household cleaners, aspirin, and caffeine. Because of these other ingredients, it is hard to know what the side effects will be from taking ecstasy and users can become very sick.

How does it work?

When people take ecstasy, the MDMA in the drug speeds up the messages travelling between the brain and the body. This is why it is known as a stimulant. Ecstasy can make people feel good in different ways, such as:

- ⊙ improved confidence
- ⊙ heightened senses (being more aware)
- ⊙ feelings of happiness
- ⊙ increased energy.

Ecstasy can affect people in different ways depending on a number of things like:

- ⊙ bodyweight
- ⊙ how much ecstasy you have taken
- ⊙ the strength of the drug
- ⊙ if it is taken with any other substances.

Normally users will experience the effects of ecstasy around 20 minutes after the pill is taken. The effects can last for up to six hours.

How do people use it?

Ecstasy is usually swallowed, but it can also be smoked, snorted, injected (the tablets are crushed first), or by suppository (inserting it into your bottom).

What are the short term harms from using ecstasy?

There are harms from using ecstasy both as soon as the drug is taken, and immediately after the drug has worn off (coming down). These include:

- ⊙ anxiety
- ⊙ rapid heartbeat and high blood pressure
- ⊙ high body temperature
- ⊙ nausea (reduced appetite and feeling sick)
- ⊙ insomnia (not being able to sleep)
- ⊙ vomiting
- ⊙ hallucinations and paranoia
- ⊙ increased risk of stroke.

What are the long term harms from using ecstasy?

If people are using ecstasy over a long time, they might start to experience the following problems:

- ⊙ getting sick all the time
- ⊙ feelings of depression
- ⊙ weight loss
- ⊙ insomnia
- ⊙ loss of concentration
- ⊙ feelings of irritation
- ⊙ jaw clenching and teeth grinding that can lead to dental issues.

Overdose

Overdosing on ecstasy can cause serious physical and mental harm. Signs that someone has overdosed from ecstasy include:

- ⊙ extreme thirst
- ⊙ feelings of agitation
- ⊙ sweating
- ⊙ fits.

If someone has overdosed on ecstasy, there is a chance they could suffer from:

- ⊙ meltdown of their muscles (known as rhabdomyolysis)
- ⊙ kidney or liver failure, which can lead to death
- ⊙ brain damage, which can lead to death.



Mixing ecstasy with other drugs

It can be very dangerous to mix ecstasy with other drugs. Taking ecstasy can be dangerous by itself, but mixing it with another drug increases the risk to the user of having a serious health problem:

- ⦿ mixing ecstasy and alcohol can make people feel like they are not drunk, and increases the risk of dehydration
- ⦿ mixing ecstasy and medication for depression can cause people to feel tired or clumsy, and also feel like they are drunk
- ⦿ mixing ecstasy and cannabis puts the body under a lot of stress and increases the chance of overdosing
- ⦿ mixing ecstasy with amphetamines or cocaine (which are also stimulant drugs) can lead to stroke or brain damage.

Giving up ecstasy (withdrawal)

Ecstasy is not usually a drug that people use regularly and for a long time. However, people that do use ecstasy all the time may experience some withdrawal symptoms because their body is used to it. Symptoms of withdrawal are:

- ⦿ cravings
- ⦿ feeling sore
- ⦿ tiredness
- ⦿ not sleeping well
- ⦿ feeling down.

These symptoms are usually strongest in the first week after giving up, and should disappear after a month. However, there is a possibility that some users may be more prone to developing longer term depression.

Alcohol and Drug Telephone Support Services

If you want help or are worried about someone's ecstasy use call the **Alcohol and Drug Telephone Support Service** in your state or see the [Knowledge Centre's listing of programs](#)

ACT

Ph: (02) 6207 9977

NSW

Ph: (02) 9361 8000 (metro)

Ph: 1800 422 599 (rural)

NT

Ph: 1800 131 350

Qld

Ph: 1800 177 833

SA

Ph: 1300 131 340

Tas

Ph: 1800 811 994

Vic

Ph: 1800 888 236

WA

Ph: (08) 9442 5000

Ph: 1800 198 024 (rural)

References

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