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Tick Titles

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- Know The facts (For Youth)
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- Drug Information For Parents

Preferred Language English Greek

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Free Information Order Form

Return to - AGWS, 7 Union Street, Brunswick Victoria 3056



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Ecstasy

**Australian Greek
Welfare Society**



What is Ecstasy'?

Ecstasy is the street name for the illegal and drug Methylenedioxymethamphetamine, first synthesized in 1914. It is an amphetamine based hallucinogenic designer drug that is taken orally, usually in pill or capsule form. In some instances, users have been known to snort or inject this drug, but this is a rare occurrence.

Common effects

The effects of ecstasy usually begin about 20 minutes after consumption but can take longer, and can last for hours. The effects vary dramatically depending on the user, dose, purity, and the environment in which it is taken.

Most commonly, stimulant like effects are produced, including enhanced sense of pleasure, confidence and increased energy. Its psychedelic effects include feelings of peacefulness, acceptance and empathy.

Associated dangers

Whilst many people know about the 'up' side to ecstasy use, little is said about the negative effects it can also have.

Typically, ecstasy use increases the heart rate, blood pressure, and leads to teeth grinding. The increase in heart rate and blood pressure can place people with diabetes, liver problems, epilepsy, circulatory and heart disease in danger.

Some people feel sick, suffer chills, tremors, blurred vision and experience stiffening of arms, legs and particularly the jaw. It has also been noted to produce hallucina-

It has also been noted to produce hallucinations, impaired speech, anxiety, paranoia, depression, insomnia, and dehydration for up to several weeks in certain individuals. In extreme cases, side effects have included hypertension, heart or kidney failure, increased body temperature, and even death.

The chemical make up of ecstasy is similar to two other synthetic drugs, MDA and Methamphetamine. Both these chemicals are known to cause brain damage, particularly MDA (ecstasy's chemical cousin) which destroys serotonin producing cells that play a vital role in managing aggression, memory, appetite, mood, sexual activity, sleep and sensitivity to pain. On the other hand, Methamphetamine causes the degeneration of neurons containing the neurotransmitter dopamine, an important issue to consider being that damage to dopamine containing neurons is the underlying cause of the motor disturbances seen in Parkinson's disease*.

Current scientific evidence suggests that at the very least, people who take ecstasy (even just a few times) are risking long term, perhaps permanent problems with learning and memory*. The extent of the damage to the brain is directly related to the amount of ecstasy actually consumed.

Signals to watch out for

An ecstasy overdose is characterised by high blood pressure, faintness, panic attacks, and, in more severe cases, loss of consciousness, seizures, and a drastic rise

in body temperature. Overdoses can be fatal, as they may result in heart failure, extreme heat stroke or brain haemorrhage.

What to do ...

If you, as a parent or friend wish to discuss a person's ecstasy use with them, do so when they are sober. There is little use in trying to communicate with someone who is not sober. If you require support or advice in tackling this issue, the Australian Greek Welfare Society as well as numerous other organisations can provide you with assistance.

If on the other hand someone you know is using ecstasy and begins to feel extremely hot, confused, unwell, unable to speak, complains of headaches, vomits, is unable to urinate, begins convulsing, faints or collapses – you should contact an ambulance immediately by dialling 000. You should then stay with that person until help arrives, ensuring that their clothes are loosened so that they may cool down. If the person is unconscious, don't leave them on their back – instead turn them to their side, and tilt their head backward to ensure that their airways are not blocked (recovery position).

When the ambulance arrives, provide the paramedics with as much information as possible in order to assist them in administering the right treatment.

* National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

** Australian Drug Foundation (ADF)