

Substance Use, Abuse and Dependence

Classification and Information on Substances

Amphetamines (Ecstasy)

DESCRIPTION	The principle active ingredient is methylenedioxy-methamphetamine (MDMA). It is found in tablet form, ranging in colour, design, ingredients and potency. It can also be found less frequently in powder or capsule form.
MODE OF ADMINISTRATION	Ecstasy is generally ingested orally by swallowing it. It is less frequently snorted, smoked, injected or inserted anally (also known as shafting).
PRIMARY EFFECT	Central nervous system stimulant and hallucinogen.
SHORT-TERM EFFECTS	<p>Ecstasy affects the central nervous system directly. Depending on the mix of ingredients, once absorbed (30 – 90 minutes after ingestion) it usually has the following effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speeds up the nervous system; • Increases blood pressure and heart rate; • Increases body temperature and sweating; • Enhances mood, with an increase in feeling good, happy, confident, and energised but relaxed (therefore known as ‘the love drug’); • Involuntary teeth clenching and grinding, muscle tension and aches, dry mouth, rapid eye movement, decreased appetite and need to defecate; • Visual and perceptual distortions, and altered sense of time; • Loss of motivation and diminished inhibitions; • Can cause nausea, insomnia, anxiety, paranoia, concentration difficulties and depression; • Can inhibit sexual performance despite enhanced desire; • Large doses can lead to extremely high temperatures (hyperthermia), confusion, headaches, vomiting, racing heart, convulsions, irrational behaviour, loss of control of body movements, tremors, difficulty urinating, collapsing, dehydration, hallucinations, and in rare cases death; • Can be extremely harmful to people who are suffering from hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, epilepsy, or mental illness.
LONG-TERM EFFECTS	<p>Although toxic to the body, the long-term effects are difficult to identify because of variations in pharmacological agents, chemicals used to manufacture them, and possible contaminants present. However, long-term Ecstasy use can lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive impairments (including memory loss); • Serotonin depletion (which can lead to a disturbance in mood, sleeping and eating habits, as well as, thought processes, sexual function and sensitivity to pain); • Psychiatric complications (including depression, anxiety, paranoid ideation, increased impulsiveness, insomnia, psychosis); • Other long-terms effects may be present depending on other ingredients used; • Can be extremely harmful to people who are suffering from hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, epilepsy, or mental illness.
ADDICTION POTENTIAL	High psychological and physical addiction potential (not on MDMA per se but on other ingredients that may be present).
TREATMENT OPTIONS	In cases of heavy and prolonged use, inpatient and/or outpatient treatment with the use of multiple therapeutic methods (individual, family and group psychotherapy) is usually necessary to achieve lasting abstinence. Co-morbid conditions are treated if required.