

ECSTASY (MDMA)

Street names

Ecstasy, E, XTC, eccys, pills, caps, crystal, MD, pingers, molly.

What is it?

MDMA is the abbreviated name for the drug 3,4 methylenedioxymethamphetamine which is chemically related to methamphetamines. The drug is commonly referred to as 'ecstasy' (because of how it makes people feel) and has both stimulant and mildly hallucinogenic effects.

What does it look like?

MDMA comes in many forms including pills, capsules (caps) powder and crystal which is sold in points (1/10th of a gram) or grams. Pills and caps are the most popular form available on the black market in Australia.

Since 2012 crystal MDMA has become more popular and widespread. The crystal form of ecstasy contains more of the active ingredient MDMA, which is why it is more often more potent.

Pills (tablets) come in a range of shapes, colours, sizes and logos often depicting popular cultural icons of the time. Whereas MDMA powder or crystal ranges in colour from white to beige/brown and its texture varies from fine powder to clear crystal flakes or crushed glass/rocks.

How is it usually taken?

Ecstasy is mainly swallowed, but it can also be snorted. On rare occasions people may also smoke, inject or insert into the anus or vagina.

Immediate effects

Within 30-60 minutes of swallowing ecstasy (or faster if people snort it) people will begin to feel its effects. Depending on how much ecstasy is used can be active for up to 6-8 hours. The immediate effects are:

- Euphoria and a sense of wellbeing
- Feelings of intimacy with others

- Increased energy
- Confidence
- A lack of inhibitions
- Nausea
- Sweating
- Increased blood pressure and pulse rate
- Jaw clenching and teeth grinding

The come down

Many people who use ecstasy will experience a 'come-down' usually 24-48 hours after they have used the drug where they feel physically and emotionally drained. Symptoms include not being hungry, sleep problems, feeling depressed and anxious, muscle aches and finding it hard to concentrate.

Long-term effects

Not much is known about the long-term effects of ecstasy, however many people report that they become tolerant and need to take more the drug to get the same effect.

Some people who have used the drug long-term have reported experiencing depression and some memory and cognitive impairment.

Mixing ecstasy with other drugs

It is best not to mix alcohol and other drugs when using ecstasy. Mixing ecstasy with monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MOIs) antidepressant drugs such as Nardil, Parnate and Marplan can lead to a potentially dangerous condition called serotonin syndrome (overheating) which can be fatal.

Other antidepressant and anxiety medications known as SSRIs (i.e. Prozac, Paxil and Zoloft) do not interact dangerously with MDMA but may interfere with their effectiveness.

ECSTASY (MDMA)



Other things to consider

- Contrary to popular belief ecstasy is not a 'safe' drug - MDMA toxicity (overdose) can be fatal and deaths around the world are increasing;
- Ecstasy may cause an increase in body temperature and a serious health concern is dehydration, overheating and heatstroke which can lead to serotonin syndrome;
- The potency of ecstasy in all forms (pills, capsules, powder and crystal) is increasing around the world including Australia;
- In rare cases people have suffered heart attacks and strokes after using ecstasy.

Harm reduction advice

- Be careful with your dose. Start with a low dose and give the drug time to take effect before redosing;
- Take regular breaks from dancing, drink at least 500mls of water per hour if active or half that not active;
- Take a break and chill out regularly to reduce the risk of heatstroke;
- If somebody is overheating, take them to a cool place, remove clothing and use water to try to cool them down;
- If someone is experiencing nausea, vomiting, chest pain, racing heart, paranoia, anxiety, panic and agitation and are muscle rigidity seek medical assistance immediately.