Ecstasy

What is ecstasy?
Drugs sold as ecstasy may not contain any methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA); they can be a mix of amphetamine, paramethoxyamphetamine (PMA), ketamine, NBOMe, methylene or other substances.

For more information on these substances, check out adf.org.au/drug-facts/

Ecstasy is an empathogen, which means it increases an individual’s feeling of empathy and compassion towards others.

Ecstasy contains the drug MDMA. However, many pills sold as ecstasy only have a small amount of MDMA or none at all. Other drugs and ‘fillers’ are often used instead. This makes it hard to know what reactions to expect after taking ecstasy or how bad the side effects will be.

Other names
Eckies, E, XTC, pills, pingngs, bikkies, flippers, molly

How is ecstasy used?
Ecstasy comes in a tablet form and is usually swallowed. The pills come in different colours and sizes and are often imprinted with a picture or symbol. It can also come as capsules, powder or crystal.

Effects of ecstasy

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries some risk. It’s important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

Ecstasy affects everyone differently, based on:

- size, weight and health
- whether the person is used to taking it
- whether other drugs are taken around the same time
- the amount taken
- the strength of the drug (varies from batch to batch).

The effects of ecstasy are usually felt about 20 minutes to an hour after it’s taken and last for around 6 hours.

You may experience:

- feeling happy, energetic and confident
- large pupils
- jaw clenching and teeth grinding
- heightened senses (sight, hearing and touch)
- excessive sweating and skin tingles
- muscle aches and pains
- nausea and reduced appetite
- fast heartbeat

If you take a large amount or have a strong batch of ecstasy, you may also experience:

- increased blood pressure
- dehydration
- heat stroke
- drinking extreme amounts of water (can cause death).

Coming down

In the days after ecstasy use, you may experience:

- restless sleep and exhaustion
- anxiety, irritability and depression
- difficulty concentrating.

The use of depressant drugs such as alcohol, benzodiazepines or cannabis to help with these ‘come down’ effects, may result in dependence on both types of drugs.
Ecstasy statistics

National
• 11.2% of Australians aged 14 years and over have used ecstasy one or more times in their life.8
• 2.2% of Australians aged 14 years and over have used ecstasy in the previous 12 months.8

Young people
• 3.1% of 12-17 year olds have tried ecstasy.9
• Young Australians (aged 14–29) first try ecstasy at 18.7 years on average.8

Ecstasy and the law
Federal and state laws provide penalties for possessing, using, making or selling ecstasy, or driving under its influence.

Long term effects
Regular use of a lot of ecstasy may eventually cause:

• colds or flu
• depression
• needing to use more to get the same effect
• dependence on ecstasy
• memory and concentration problems
• financial, work and social problems.1,8

Mixing ecstasy with other drugs
The effects of taking ecstasy with other drugs – including over-the-counter or prescribed medications – can be unpredictable and dangerous, and could cause:

Ecstasy + alcohol: increased risk of dehydration and consequently drinking too much water.9

Ecstasy + ice or speed: increased risk of anxiety and reduced brain functioning due to dopamine depletion. Enormous strain on the heart and other parts of the body, which can lead to stroke.5

Ecstasy + antidepressants: Drowsiness, clumsiness, restlessness and feeling drunk and dizzy.6

Withdrawal
Giving up ecstasy after using it for a long time is challenging because the body has to get used to functioning without it. Withdrawal symptoms should settle down after a week and will mostly disappear after a month. Symptoms include:

• cravings for ecstasy
• aches and pains
• exhaustion
• restless sleep
• agitation
• trouble concentrating
• anxiety and depression.7

Find out more about withdrawal at adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/supporting-a-loved-one/withdrawal/
Other help, support services and resources

Links to further help and support • adf.org.au/help-support/

Information on safe partying tips for school leavers • adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/teenagers/safe-partying/safe-partying-tips-for-school-leavers/

References


Always call an ambulance on triple zero (000) if an overdose is suspected: tell the paramedic exactly what has been taken. Paramedics are there to help and will not involve the police unless there is a danger to themselves or others.