

ECSTASY

WHAT'S ECSTASY?

It's an illegal drug from the amphetamine category that is synthetically manufactured into tablets, sometimes with pictures or symbols on the surface. Ecstasy contains the drug methylene-dioxymethamphetamine or MDMA; however, many pills sold as ecstasy only have a small amount of MDMA or none at all. Other drugs and substances like household cleaning products are often used instead of MDMA. This makes it hard to know what reactions to expect or what the side-effects may be. Sometimes two pills can look the same but have very different effects as they contain different ingredients.

Ecstasy is a stimulant and a hallucinogen so is classified as a multi-action drug. Stimulant drugs speed up your central nervous system or CNS and hallucinogens affect the way you perceive the world. So, you may see or hear things in a distorted way or think that you have heard or seen something that is really not there.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF ECSTASY?

The effects of ecstasy can be felt 20 minutes to an hour after being taken and can last for around six hours. Taking ecstasy will be different for everyone – depending on all those things you will have discussed when considering the drug use triangle such as the drug, the individual and the environment. You might feel confident, a closeness to others, happy and energetic, calm and relaxed or paranoid and anxious. You might also experience other symptoms such as jaw clenching and teeth grinding, nausea, anxiety, sweating and skin tingles, convulsions and vomiting, muscle aches and pains, dehydration, a faster heart beat and hallucinations.

As the drug wears off, you might experience cravings, depression, anxiety, paranoia and fatigue, and have difficulty concentrating.

Beyond these symptoms caused by MDMA, there are additional risks as you don't know what other substances are in the tablet. For example, how much MDMA has been used, what other substances or drugs have been added and what sort of conditions the drug has been manufactured in. All of these factors when combined have real potential for harm. Because the composition of the pills is often unknown, there is also a risk of overdose if the user doesn't feel the expected effects and takes another pill, compounding the potential side-effects.

And remember, you might have a different experience each time you use the drug; and a different experience from others using the same drug.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF YOU MIX ECSTASY WITH OTHER DRUGS?

If you mix the use of ecstasy with other drugs the potential for harm is even greater. Mixing ecstasy with alcohol can increase the risk of dehydration. To combat this, you might drink too much water and experience dilutional hyponatremia – where the brain swells from too much fluid intake sometimes resulting in a coma. Mixing alcohol and ecstasy, combined with strenuous dancing can cause the body to overheat as it raises the body temperature to dangerous levels and your body loses the ability to cool off.

WHAT'S THE LAW SAY?

So, what does the law say about ecstasy use? Ecstasy is illegal in WA and there are penalties for possessing, using, making or selling it. If you drive a car under the influence of ecstasy and are caught, you can be disqualified from driving (especially if you're on L or P plates), fined or imprisoned. You could also really hurt yourself or someone else.

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To sum it up, three key points about ecstasy are:

1. Ecstasy is a stimulant and a hallucinogen. It's a multi-action drug as it has properties of more than one of the common drug classifications.
2. Ecstasy pills vary in the amount of MDMA and other substances that they contain. This makes it hard to know what reactions to expect or how bad the side-effects may be from using the drug. Remember, every drug experience can be different.
3. Ecstasy is illegal in WA and there are penalties for possessing, using, making or selling it.

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NEED HELP?

If you or anyone you know is experiencing a drug use issue, contact WA's 24hr Drug and Alcohol Support Line.

- Metro (08) 9442 5000
- Country 1800 198 024
- Emergency 000

Live chat with a qualified and experienced drug counsellor is also offered at:
<http://drugaware.com.au>

