



(A joint project between the  
Rotary Club of Brisbane  
Mid-City and DRUG ARM)



Centre for Addiction Research & Education  
(A division of DRUG ARM Australasia)

**DRUG ARM  
National Office**

**GPO Box 590**

**Brisbane Qld 4001**

**Phone: 1300 656 800**

**library@drugarm.com.au**

**www.drugarm.com.au**

# Ecstasy

## Slang terms

E's, Eckies, XTC, and MDMA are the most common terms used in Australia at present.

## What is Ecstasy?

Ecstasy is the common term for MDMA or MethyleneDioxyMethAmphetamine. It is similar in chemical structure to amphetamines and some hallucinogens. Ecstasy is usually sold as small tablets, which come in a variety of sizes and colours. It can also come in powder form, which can be inhaled through the nose. There have also been reports of people injecting themselves with ecstasy.

## History

In 1914, the German company Merck Chemical developed MDMA, as an appetite suppressant. Until 1985, MDMA was also used extensively in America, in psychotherapy, until it was scheduled under that country's Controlled Substance Act. In Australia, it is illegal to sell, manufacture, possess or use ecstasy.

## Immediate effects

These effects can begin within an hour of taking ecstasy. Most effects last up to six hours, but some may persist for up to 32 hours.

- Increased pulse rate & blood pressure
- Increased body temperature
- Feelings of closeness with other people
- Jaw clenching, grinding teeth
- Reduced sexual inhibition, as a result of ecstasy, may lead to unprotected or unwise sexual activity
- Nausea, sweating, dehydration
- Increased confidence
- Anxiety & paranoia
- Pupil contraction

## Higher doses

Increasing doses of MDMA can produce:

- Hallucinations
- Sensations of floating
- Vomiting
- Extreme dehydration
- Blurred vision
- Irrational behaviour
- Convulsions

Ecstasy may also have a hangover effect including: loss of appetite, depression, muscle aches, insomnia and difficulty in concentration, particularly on the day after taking the drug.

## Long-term effects

Most drugs, if used at particularly high doses over a long period of time, are likely to cause some health problems. There is not much known about whether long-term use may cause damage to the brain, liver and heart.

Studies in Australia and the USA have found that few people seem to use MDMA for long periods. This may be due to an increase in the unpleasant effect of the drug with prolonged use.

In the 2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, of the half a million (2.9%) Australians over 14 years, who had used ecstasy/designer drugs in the last 12 months, 10.4% of these were aged 20-29 and were predominantly males.

# Ecstasy...

## Overdose

Acute MDMA poisoning or overdose can and does occur. MDMA poisoning results in very high blood pressure, fast heartbeat and a very high body temperature.

Severe reactions to MDMA have occurred and there have been a number of deaths related to the use of MDMA in Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Many of these were associated with dehydration and overheating.

Ecstasy is regarded as a dangerous substance, particularly for people with heart or respiratory problems, as well as those with depression or any other psychological disorder.

High doses of MDMA can produce severe hallucinations. People sometimes behave irrationally when they are experiencing hallucinations and can be a danger to themselves or to others.

## Tolerance

Tolerance occurs when a person needs higher doses of a drug to achieve the same effects they used to get with smaller amounts of the drug.

Research suggests that people do develop a tolerance to the pleasurable effects of ecstasy. It also appears that the positive effects decrease, while the negative effects increase, with prolonged use of the drug. People report needing to take more of the drug to experience the same positive effects but this also increases the unpleasant effects.

## The law

In Australia, it is illegal to use, possess or supply ecstasy.

## Who uses Ecstasy?

Generally, ecstasy is used to dance all night at rave parties. It is also taken to experience its hallucinogenic effects and for a variety of other reasons.

## References

[http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/article.asp?ContentID=club\\_drugs](http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/article.asp?ContentID=club_drugs)

<http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=240&np=158&id=2106>

<http://www.reachout.com.au/default.asp?ti=53>

Emmett, David and Nice, Graeme, (2006) Understanding street drugs : a handbook of substance misuse for parents, teachers and other professionals, 2nd edn, London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Healy, Justin (ed), (2004) Illicit drugs, (Issues in Society series), Rozelle, NSW: Spinney Press

Copyright © 2007 DRUG ARM Australasia. This work is copyright. You may download, display, print and reproduce this material in unaltered form only (retaining this notice) for your personal, non-commercial use or use within your organisation. All other rights are reserved. Requests and enquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the Director of CARE, DRUG ARM Australasia, GPO Box 590, BRISBANE Qld 4001, Australia.

---

For more information on these and other topics contact:

**Drug & Alcohol Information Centre**

24 Hamilton Place Bowen Hills Q 4006 GPO Box 590 Brisbane Q 4001

Ph: (07) 3620 8822 Fax: (07) 3620 8823

Email: [library@drugarm.com.au](mailto:library@drugarm.com.au) Website: [www.drugarm.com.au](http://www.drugarm.com.au)