

MDMA●

Note: Drugs sold as MDMA (ecstasy) may not contain any methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA); they can be a mix of amphetamine, paramethoxyamphetamine (PMA), ketamine, NBOMe, synthetic cathinones or other substances.

What is MDMA?

Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) is an empathogen, which means it increases an individual’s feeling of empathy and compassion towards others.

MDMA is commonly known as **ecstasy**.¹ However, some pills sold as ecstasy may 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 MDMA or if negative side effects will be experienced.

Other names

Ecstasy, caps, Eckies, E, XTC, pills, pingers, bikkies, flippers, molly, M&M^{1,2}

Other types of empathogens

- Ethylone
- PMA and PMMA
- Mephedrone

How is MDMA used?

MDMA is usually swallowed in its tablet or capsule form, but can also come as a powder or crystal. The pills come in different colours and sizes and are often imprinted with a picture, symbol or logo.² When sold in pill form, two pills with the same logo or symbol may have different effects — they can come from different sources and have different ingredients.¹

Effects of MDMA

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.

MDMA 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 MDMA are usually felt about 20 minutes to an hour after it’s taken and last for around 3-4 hours.^{1,2} The height of this experience is sometimes known as ‘peaking’.¹

You may experience:

- euphoria
- feeling energetic and confident
- Dilated (enlarged) pupils
- jaw clenching and teeth grinding
- heightened senses (sight, hearing and touch)
- excessive sweating and skin tingles
- muscle aches and pains
- reduced appetite

- fast heartbeat
- increased blood pressure
- dehydration
- heat stroke
- drinking extreme amounts of water (can cause death).¹⁻⁴

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

- floating sensations
- perceptual changes, such as visual and auditory hallucinations
- out-of-character irrational behaviour
- anxiety
- irritability, paranoia and aggression
- vomiting
- high body temperature
- racing heart beat
- convulsions.^{1,3,4}

Coming down

In the days after MDMA use, you may experience:

- restless sleep and exhaustion
- anxiety, irritability and depression
- paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious and frightened)
- difficulty concentrating.¹⁻⁴

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.

Long term effects

Regular use of MDMA may cause:

- colds or flu
- depression
- needing to use more to get the same effect
- dependence on MDMA
- memory and concentration problems
- Liver problems
- financial, work and social problems.¹⁻³

Mixing MDMA with other drugs

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

MDMA + alcohol: increased risk of dehydration and consequently drinking too much water.⁵

MDMA + ice, speed or cocaine: increased risk of anxiety and reduced brain functioning due to dopamine depletion. Enormous strain on the cardiovascular system and other parts of the body, which can lead to stroke.^{6,7}

MDMA + antidepressants: Drowsiness, clumsiness, restlessness and feeling drunk and dizzy.⁸

Withdrawal

Giving up MDMA 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 MDMA
- aches and pains
- exhaustion
- restless sleep
- agitation
- trouble concentrating
- anxiety and depression.⁹

Read more about withdrawal - adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/supporting-a-loved-one/withdrawal/

Getting help

If your use of MDMA is affecting your health, family, relationships, work, school, financial or other life situations, you can find help and support.

Call 1300 85 85 84 to speak to a real person and get answers to your questions as well as advice on practical 'next steps'.

You can also search our list of Support Services for services in your local area - adf.org.au/help-support/

MDMA and the Law

Federal and state laws provide penalties for possessing, using, making or selling MDMA, or driving under its influence.

See also, drugs and the law - adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/the-law/

MDMA Statistics

National

- 11.2% of Australians aged 14 years and over have used MDMA one or more times in their life.¹⁰
- 2.2% of Australians aged 14 years and over have used MDMA in the previous 12 months.¹⁰

Young people

- Young Australians (aged 14–29) first try MDMA at 18.7 years on average.¹⁰
- 6% of 12-17 year olds have tried MDMA¹¹

References

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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.

Other help, support services and resources

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

● Further information

DrugInfo • 1300 85 85 84

Free confidential information and advice about alcohol and other drugs (9am - 5pm, Mon-Fri)

Family Drug Help • 1300 660 068 • www.familydrughelp.com.au (Victorian-based)

Services are available to support those around you who may be affected by your drug use. As well as providing understanding, they can provide information about how best to help during treatment.

Family Drug Support • 1300 368 186 • www.fds.org.au (Australia-wide)



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