

Methoxetamine ●

What is methoxetamine?

Methoxetamine (MXE) is a dissociative drug, which means it causes people to feel separated or detached from their body or physical environment. Dissociatives are similar to psychedelics, they can cause hallucinations and other changes in thoughts, emotions and consciousness.¹

MXE may also be known as M-ket, Kmax and Mexxy.²

MXE is also a New Psychoactive Substance (NPS). NPSs are a range of drugs that have been designed to mimic existing illicit drugs. In the case of MXE, it attempts to recreate the effects of ketamine and has been marketed and sold online as a legal alternative. However, in some states and territories, NPSs are illegal.³

MXE is mostly sold as a white, off-white, beige or yellow powder but can also be found in capsule or liquid form. It is often labelled as “Not for Human Consumption” to avoid legal restrictions regarding the importation and sale of illicit drugs and NPSs. All drugs sold in powder form may be sold cut (mixed) with other substances, which can reduce the purity of the dose and have unintended effects. This means that the effects can be unpredictable.⁴

Other types of commonly used dissociatives

- Ketamine
- Nitrous oxide

How is it used?

MXE is usually snorted, swallowed or injected²

One of the most significant differences between ketamine and MXE is the length of time before its effects are felt. MXE is said to be slower-acting, but more potent and long-lasting. It can take anywhere from 5-90 minutes to feel the effects. This has led to people overdosing, as they have taken additional doses while waiting for the effect to be felt. When taken orally, the effects are usually felt within 15-45 minutes. After snorting, the effects are reported to occur within a few minutes.⁵

Effects of Methoxetamine (MXE)

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.

MXE can affect everyone differently, based on:

- the amount taken
- a person’s height, weight and health
- whether the person is used to taking it
- whether other drugs are taken around the same time
- the strength of the drug (which can vary from batch to batch).

In small doses the following effects may occur and may last for up to 7 hours:

- euphoria
- empathy
- pleasant sensory experience
- dissociation
- vivid hallucinations
- introspection
- anti-depressant^{2,3,5}

Some adverse effects include:

- disorientation
- confusion
- dizziness
- anxiety
- rapid heart rate
- nausea
- paranoia
- vomiting
- slurring or difficulty speaking
- psychomotor agitation e.g. tapping or pacing.^{2,3}

Higher doses or long-term use of MXE can lead to:

- cardiovascular problems
- respiratory damage
- increased risk of injury
- speech difficulties
- memory loss
- panic attacks
- depression.^{2,3}

As with ketamine, long term use of MXE is also associated with kidney damage and cystitis.²

Using methoxetamine with other drugs

The effects of combining drugs – including over-the-counter or prescribed medications – can be unpredictable and dangerous. There is little evidence available on the effects of MXE when combined with other drugs. Anecdotal reports suggest that mixing MXE with alcohol, cannabis and antidepressants should be avoided.^{2,6}

Health and safety

Use of MXE is likely to be more dangerous when:

- taken in combination with alcohol or other drugs, including over-the-counter or prescribed medications
- driving or operating heavy machinery
- judgment or motor coordination is required
- alone (in case medical assistance is required)

- the person has a mental health problem
- the person has an existing heart problem.

Injecting drugs, including MXE, can cause damage to veins and other tissues.

Sharing needles may also transmit:

- Tetanus
- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- HIV/AIDS.

Dependence and tolerance

There is limited evidence regarding MXE and dependence, however, experts believe that the similarity to ketamine means that it carries a comparable risk of dependence. While the Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs (UK) ranks ketamine as less harmful than other illicit drugs such as methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine or GHB, some studies have indicated a high risk for tolerance and dependence.^{2,5,7}

Urinary tract effects

When used repeatedly and for extended periods, MXE seems to show signs of producing similar bladder and urinary tract problems to that of ketamine. Ketamine-induced cystitis can become extremely serious and is a painful condition needing ongoing treatment.² Anyone suffering from bladder and urinary tract problems needs to stop using MXE and see a health professional.

Coming down/withdrawal:

In the days after MXE use, the following may be experienced:

- low mood and/or depressive thoughts
- insomnia
- memory loss
- impaired judgement, disorientation
- clumsiness
- aches and pains.^{2,5}

References

1. Li L, & Vlside P. . Ketamine: 50 Years of Modulating the Mind. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*. 2016;10:1-15.
2. Psychonaut Wiki. Methoxetamine 2020 [Available from: <https://psychonautwiki.org/wiki/Methoxetamine>].
3. World Health Organization. Methoxetamine (MXE) Critical Review Report. 2015.
4. Bright S. Not for human consumption: new and emerging drugs in Australia. Melbourne Alcohol and Drug Foundation 2013.
5. Hartney E. What to Know About MXE Use 2019 [Available from: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-mxe-or-methoxetamine-21863>].
6. Drug Science. Methoxetamine n.d. [Available from: <https://drugscience.org.uk/drug-information/methoxetamine/#264875612292509>].
7. Morgan C, Norooha, L., Muetzelfedt, M., Fieldng, A. & Curr, V.,. Harms and benefits associated with psychoactive drugs: findings of an international survey of active drug users *Journal of Psychopharmacology* 2013;27(6):497-506.

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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