



MDMA



POWDERS & PILLS



METHYLENE-DIOXY-METH-AMPHETAMINE

BACKGROUND



MDMA (3-4 methylenedioxymethamphetamine), more commonly known as ecstasy, is a chemical first made a hundred years ago by German scientists searching for a range of medicine.

During the 1950s and 60s, the US Army conducted research into its use as a possible 'chemical weapon'.

During the 1970s, the therapeutic possibilities of MDMA were investigated by Dr. Alexander Shulgin (the godfather of ecstasy), who was particularly interested in its empathogenic effects.

MDMA began to be used for so-called 'recreational purposes' in gay clubs and bars in the USA during the mid-1980s. It became popular in the UK during the rave scene of the 1990s.

HOW IT WORKS



MDMA in powder, or pill form, increases the amount of certain chemicals, particularly serotonin, in the brain. These chemicals help to keep you balanced and feeling 'normal'. When their levels are altered, by using MDMA, they change the way you feel, physically and emotionally.

The length of time it takes for the effects to be felt will vary from person to person. This can depend on how the drug is taken (swallowed or snorted) but is also influenced by size, gender and the amount of active chemical in the pill or powder. Generally, the affects will start between 30 and 45 minutes after being taken, reach a peak after about two hours and then tail-off after about seven to eight hours.



ECSTASY PILLS

**MDMA IN ITS 'ECSTASY PILL' FORM.
ECSTASY PILLS CAN CONTAIN VARIOUS AMOUNTS OF
MDMA, NO MDMA AT ALL, OR COMPLETELY
DIFFERENT SUBSTANCES.**

MDMA usually comes in the form of small pills, known as ecstasy, the most widely used form of MDMA. These vary in size, shape, colour and texture, and have names that reflect the symbol stamped on them, such as: Stars; Mitubishi; 007s; Pink Panthers; Doves, etc.

The pills are produced using MDMA powder plus binders, fillers, colourings and other substances.

Method of use

Pills are normally swallowed.



MDMA POWDER

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, MDMA POWDER HAS BECOME A MORE COMMONLY USED FORM OF ECSTASY AND HAS GAINED A REPUTATION AS 'PURER' OR 'STRONGER' THAN THE TRADITIONAL PILL FORM.

MDMA powder is a white, crystalline substance, but can vary in tone and colour depending on what it is mixed with.

Method of use

It can be dissolved in liquid and drunk, or wrapped in paper and swallowed, known as bombing or parachuting. It takes longer to start working, but the effects will last longer so you don't have to keep taking more.

It can be snorted into the nose, where it is absorbed into the bloodstream through the nasal membranes. The effects will start sooner but will also wear off faster.

MDMA POWDER:

A purer form of ecstasy?



MDMA powder is found in its raw powder form or in gell capsules. MDMA powder is sometimes referred to as 'Molly'.

There are a number of reasons for this 'purity' reputation. Firstly, because of international seizures of the chemicals needed to make MDMA, many people have probably been using ecstasy tablets for the past few years which contain other chemicals rather than MDMA. Therefore, powder that actually contains MDMA will appear stronger!

Secondly, effective marketing by MDMA producers has promoted the belief that the powder is a premium product, and therefore worth paying a premium price for. In fact, logic dictates that there is even more opportunity to cut MDMA powder with other substances.

Thirdly, if you are taking powder it is easier to simply use more at any one time, making it feel more potent.

HOW MDMA MAKES YOU FEEL



The initial effects include a rush of energy, mental stimulation, euphoria, a feeling of emotional warmth and closeness to others. But, as with most things, if there is an 'up', there is inevitably a 'down'. Some of the unpleasant effects of the 'down' are feeling tense, agitated, paranoid and edgy.

We have listed some of the physical and emotional effects below. Don't forget, the intensity and duration of these effects can vary from person to person.

Physical

- Raised body temperature
- Increased heart rate
- Jaw clenching
- Sweating
- Energy rush
- Dilated Pupils

Emotional

- Openness
- Empathy
- Euphoria
- Loved-up
- Mood swings
- Anxiety
- Paranoia
- Confusion

How you can feel after...

Some people may feel tired and depressed, which can partly be a result of lack of sleep and food whilst partying for too long. It also takes a while for the chemicals in your brain to get back to their normal levels until you feel OK again.

There is some evidence that long-term use of MDMA can cause depression and mental health problems in some individuals. If you experience problems such as, depression, memory loss or irritability...listen to your body. If you are experiencing any of the things above, it is telling you to take a break or stop altogether.

CAUTION



TOLERANCE



After a while your brain gets used to MDMA. If you use it on a regular basis, you will have to up the dose to get the desired effect. This is called tolerance. Some people will use more and more to chase that 'first time' feeling. Taking more is unlikely to help, but will increase the risk of problems associated with MDMA.

When this happens, it is time to take a break. This may take weeks or months - some people may never achieve the same effect again.

MDMA & OVERDOSE



Deaths caused directly by MDMA are rare, and are known as an 'idiosyncratic reaction'. Most fatalities are caused when MDMA is combined with other drugs, including alcohol, or as a result of dehydration and heatstroke. People with pre-existing health problems, particularly heart problems, are at higher risk.

Hyperthermia

The most immediate problems associated with MDMA use are a combination of the drug and the environment in which it's used. Using MDMA in a hot club whilst dancing for long periods of time is particularly risky.

This is because MDMA raises core-body temperature and reduces the ability to cool down by sweating. Combined with energetic dancing this can cause body temperature to reach dangerous levels (hyperthermia). This can lead to collapse and organ failure, which could prove fatal.

Signs and symptoms of hyperthermia can include

- flushed face
- hot, red, dry skin
- nausea and vomiting
- headaches
- dizziness
- confusion

Hyponatremia

MDMA-related illness and deaths have been attributed to an imbalance of sodium (salt) levels in the body (hyponatremia). This can be caused by either drinking too much fluid or by your body retaining water (you cannot pee) which creates an imbalance between fluid and sodium. This can cause the brain to swell and press against the skull, leading to death in some cases.

Symptoms of hyponatremia can include:

- headache
- nausea and vomiting
- confusion
- lethargy
- spasms or cramps
- seizures
- decreased consciousness or coma



HEADS UP

Using illegal drugs is dangerous. The best way to stay safe is to not use them.

BUT, if you are determined to use MDMA, the information below will help to reduce the risks.



Stay hydrated. Regularly sip water, but don't gag down pints of the stuff in one go!



Keep your salt levels balanced by drinking an occasional fruit drink or isotonic sports drink. If the club doesn't sell them and won't let you bring your own in, buy isotonic supplements and pop them into your drink.



Do not use alcohol and ecstasy together. Alcohol will dehydrate you even further, and the combination of alcohol and MDMA can be unpredictable.



Take regular breaks, go somewhere cool to chill out.

Wear loose clothing that allows heat to escape. Wear layers that you can take off as you get hotter but you can put on again when you go back out into the cold.





Keep an eye on each other. If you or someone you are with starts to feel unwell, take them to a cool area. If they don't cool down and start to feel better after a few minutes, it is time to get medical help. Don't delay - If you leave it too long it could be too late!



Types, names, shapes, and colours of pills vary over time. But even pills that look the same may contain completely different substances - and may contain no MDMA at all!



A white powder is a white powder. Do not assume that two white powders from the same source are the same. They could be, and probably are, different strengths.



There is no way you can tell (outside of forensic analysis) how strong a particular powder might be. So knowing how much to take (if you're going to swallow it) is difficult. It is too late to go back once you have necked it.



The effects of MDMA come on faster when snorted, compared to swallowing, but will also wear off more quickly. This can lead to 'chasing the high' and using more and more.

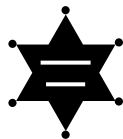


Snorting can create a nasty drip and taste to the back of the throat, and may damage the lining of the nose.



Low and slow. Diving straight in and snorting a pile of powder or necking a fistful of pills is a recipe for disaster. Starting with a small amount and waiting for the effect is safer.

THE LAW



MDMA is a class A drug. Possession, supply and production are illegal.

Possession carries a maximum sentence of 7 years imprisonment and/or a fine. Trafficking offences – selling or giving away - carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment and a fine.

A criminal record, even a caution for possession, can mess up your employment and travel plans. You will find it hard to keep (or get) a job, and you will not get a visa to travel to some countries, with a drug-related conviction.

FIND OUT MORE



There are always risks associated with using drugs, so find as much information as you can. We have listed some useful organisations and websites on the back page which can help you.

Internet Forums.

There are a lot of internet forums which discuss drugs and their use. But be careful - don't take the information at face value. While there is some useful information some of it can be dangerous and unsafe. Claims of drugs and amounts used should be treated with a healthy dose of scepticism.

Testing kits

Testing kits claim to be able to detect the presence of MDMA in a pill or powder. But don't be lulled into a false sense of security - just because MDMA is in there, it does not mean it is safe. Also, the kits can't detect all of the substances, or their dosages, contained in a pill or powder.

Help and Support

If you feel your drug use is getting out of hand, consider talking to someone. Maybe a close friend, parent, teacher or a local support service.

Here are some organisations that can also help you:



Talk to Frank

National drugs awareness site for young people and parents/carers. 24 hrs a day, seven days a week.

Call 0800 77 66 00 (calls are free and confidential)

www.talktofrank.com



Erowid

Erowid is an online library containing tens of thousands of pages of information about psychoactive drugs, plants, and chemicals, including entheogens, psychedelics.

www.erowid.org



Crew

Crew ensure that people have the best information available in order to make up their own mind about whether they should or shouldn't use drugs.

www.crew2000.org.uk



TheSite.org

TheSite.org provide factsheets and articles on all the key issues facing young people, including alcohol and drugs.

www.thesite.org