

# ECSTASY

Half of all parents in America don't know the effects of Ecstasy. Many are unsure what's in the drug.

Ecstasy is a dangerous, illegal drug that increasingly has been embraced by American teens. Chemically, Ecstasy is known as MDMA, short for 3,4 methylenedioxymethamphetamine.

Usually taken orally in the form of a pill, Ecstasy is a synthetic, psychoactive drug with both stimulant (amphetamine-like) and hallucinogenic (LSD-like) properties. Just as those who traffic in LSD have used cartoon characters and familiar logos to make their product appealing, those trafficking in Ecstasy have shown similarly keen skills and instincts for tapping into the teen market. Ecstasy pills are usually about the size of an aspirin and, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration, they have been manufactured with more than 150 different dye stamps. Many of these stamps carry familiar corporate logos or recognizable cartoon figures.

Slang or "street" names for Ecstasy include: "X," "E," "XTC," "Roll," "Adam," "Bean," the "Hug Drug" and the "Love Drug."

Ecstasy can cause severe dehydration, seizures and strokes. It can cause dramatic increases in body temperature and can lead to muscle breakdown, which can cause kidney failure. It can lead to liver and cardiovascular failure, which have been reported in some of the Ecstasy-related fatalities.

Perhaps the biggest concern about Ecstasy is its effect on the brain. Initially, Ecstasy users get a euphoric feeling due to the release of a chemical in the brain called serotonin. However, repeated use of Ecstasy ultimately may damage the cells that produce serotonin, which has an important role in the regulation of mood, appetite, pain, learning and memory.

One of the toughest things about Ecstasy for parents is that often there are no clear symptoms to tell them their children are using the drug. However, there are some general warning signs you can watch for.

Signs your child could be using drugs include: changes in peer groups; changes in sleeping pattern; declining grades; a loss of interest in hobbies or favorite activities; a lack of motivation; a hostile, uncooperative attitude; and unexplained disappearance of money or personal belongings.

Signs your child could be using Ecstasy include: dehydration; clenching of the jaw and/or grinding of teeth; a sore jaw; unusual displays of affection; pronounced mood swings; a loss of inhibitions; transfixion on sights and sounds; chills or sweating; nausea; confusion; difficulty concentrating; sleep problems; severe anxiety and/or panic attacks and depression.

Remember drug use is a decision – a decision you can influence. Research has found one of the most critical influences on kids’ decision about taking drugs is the input of parents.

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