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Drug and Alcohol Information
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Drugs a-to-z

MDMA/Ecstasy: Factsheet



Evidence ratings:

This resource has undergone expert review. See our Help/Q&A section for more details.

Year: Year 9–10, Year 11–12

Targeted Drugs: MDMA/Ecstasy

Tags: E, pills, pingers, eccy, party drugs, caps, mandy, molly

Time Allocated: Partial lesson (under 45mins)

Origin: Australian

Cost:
Free

What is MDMA/Ecstasy?

In Australia, MDMA/Ecstasy is also known as E, pills, caps, pingers, M&M, doopa, love drug, disco biscuits, XTC, X, eccy, ekky, or molly.

Ecstasy is the common name for a drug called MDMA, which is usually sold as a tablet/pill ("pills") or capsule ("caps"), although it can also come in powder or crystal form. When sold as a pill, a logo is typically stamped on the tablet, but this is no guarantee of quality or purity. For example, two pills that look the same may have very different effects as they can have different ingredients.

Analysis of drugs sold as MDMA/ecstasy in Australia shows that these contain a wide range of substances, and some contain no MDMA at all. Some substances found in these drugs can be toxic, even at low doses and even pure MDMA can be dangerous.

How many young people have tried MDMA/Ecstasy?

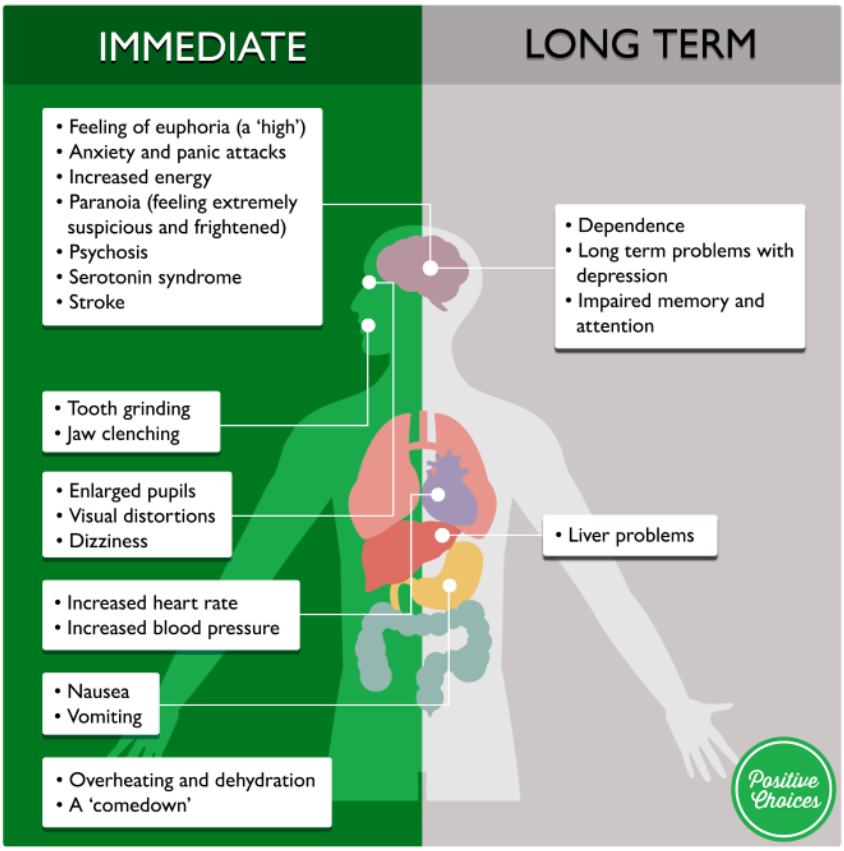
According to the 2022-2023 Australian Secondary Schools' Survey, 1 in 100 students (1%) aged 12-17 used MDMA/ecstasy in the past month.

What are the effects of MDMA/Ecstasy?

MDMA/Ecstasy causes the body's central nervous system to speed up. It can take effect within 60 minutes of initially taking it but this can vary. Sometimes people mistakenly think the first pill or cap they took isn't working and take more — this can be very dangerous.

The effects of MDMA/ecstasy can be immediate or long-term, as listed in the table below.

Immediate	Long-term
Enlarged pupils	Dependence (see glossary)
Increased heart rate and blood pressure	Long-term problems with depression
Increased energy	Liver problems
Feeling of euphoria (a 'high')	Impairments to memory and attention
Teeth grinding and jaw clenching	
Anxiety and panic attacks	
Overheating and dehydration (when the body loses more water than it takes in)	
A 'comedown' (see glossary)	
Nausea, vomiting and dizziness	
Visual distortions (things looking weird or different)	
Paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious and frightened)	
Psychosis (see glossary)	
Serotonin syndrome (see glossary)	
Stroke	



Evidence Base

This factsheet was developed following expert review by researchers at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney, the National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, and the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University.

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