Positive Choices
Drug and Alcohol Information
Get informed, stay smart, stay safe

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?

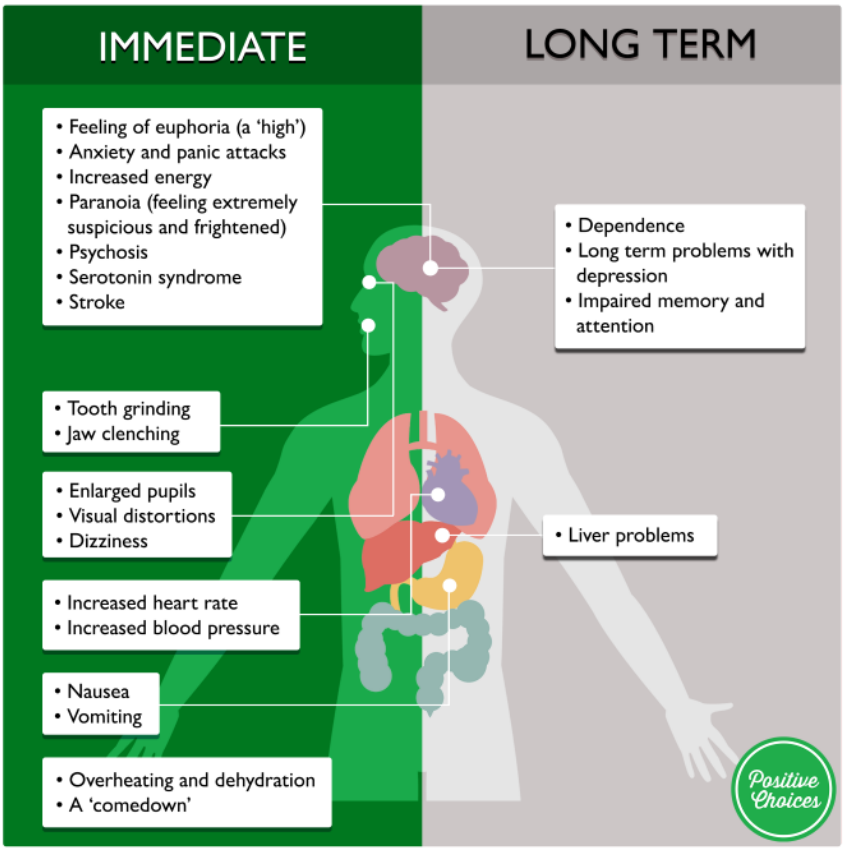
According to the 2022-2023 Australian Secondary Schools' Survey, 1 in 100 students (1%) aged 12-17 used MDMA/ecstasy in the past month.

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.

Sources

1. Scully, M., Koh, I., Bain, E., Wakefield, M., & Durkin, S. (2023). ASSAD 2022–2023: Australian secondary school students' use of alcohol and other substances. Cancer Council Victoria.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011. Australian Standard Classification of Drugs of Concern, 2nd Edition, Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra.

3. National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2006. Research Report Series— Ecstasy Abuse, National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health: Bethesda, MD.
4. Stafford, J., Breen, C. & Burns, L. (2016) Australian Drug Trends 2016: Findings from the Ecstasy and related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS). 2016 NDARC Annual Research Symposium, Sydney. National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Australia.
5. Australian Crime Commission, 2015-2016. Illicit Drug Data Report. Accessed October 2017 via https://www.acic.gov.au/publications/intelligence-products/illicit-drug-data-report-0
6. Morefield, K.M., Keane, M., Felgate, P., White, J.M. and Irvine, R.J., 2011. Pill content, dose and resulting plasma concentrations of 3,4-methylendioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) in recreational 'ecstasy' users. Addiction. 106(7): p. 1293-300.
7. Kenneally, M., Harpas, P., Granleese, J. and Chen, J.-Y., 2012. The Disappearance and Re-emergence of MDMA in South Australia. Paper presented at 21st International ANZFSS Symposium. Hobart, 23-27 September.
8. Johansen, M., Garlepp, D. and Gerstner-Stevens, J., 2012. Drug Seizures at Victorian Music Festivals. Paper presented at 21st International ANZFSS Symposium. Hobart, 23-27 September.
9. Garlepp, D., Johansen, M. and Gerstner-Stevens, J., 2012. Methorphan and piperazine derivatives in illicit drug seizures in Victoria. Paper presented at 21st International ANZFSS Symposium. Hobart, 23-27 September.
10. MIMS online, 2012. MIMS online accessed 23 August 2012 via UNSW www.mimsonline.com.au.
11. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017. 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey report, AIHW: Canberra.
12. Silins, E., Bleeker, A. and Martin, M .,2008 Ecstasy: facts and fiction (2nd Edition), National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales Sydney.
13. Liechti, M.E., Baumann, C., Gamma, A. and Vollenweider, F., 2000. Acute Psychological Effects of 3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA, "Ecstasy") are Attenuated by the Serotonin Uptake Inhibitor Citalopram Neuropsychopharmacology. 22(5): p. 513-521.
14. Baylen, C.A. and Rosenberg, H., 2006. A review of the acute subjective effects of MDMA/ecstasy. Addiction. 101(7): p. 933-47.
15. Green, A.R., Cross, A.J. and Goodwin, G.M., 1995. Review of the pharmacology and clinical pharmacology of 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA or "Ecstasy"). Psychopharmacology. 119: p. 247-260.
16. Verheyden, S.L., Henry, J.A. and Curran, H.V., 2003. Acute, sub-acute and long-term subjective consequences of 'ecstasy' (MDMA) consumption in 430 regular users. Human Psychopharmacology. 18(7): p. 507-17.
17. Degenhardt, L., Bruno, R. and Topp, L., 2010. Is ecstasy a drug of dependence? Drug and Alcohol Dependence. 107(1):p.1-10
18. Antolino-Lobo, I., Meulenbelt, J., van den Berg, M. and van Duursen, M.B., 2011. A mechanistic insight into 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine ("ecstasy")-mediated hepatotoxicity. Veterinary Quarterly. 31(4): p. 193-205.
19. Boyle, N. and Connor, T., 2010. Methylenedioxymethamphetamine ('Ecstasy')-induced immunosuppression: a cause for concern? British Journal of Pharmacology. 161: p. 17-32.
20. Parrott, A.C., 2006. MDMA in humans: factors which affect the neuropsychobiological profiles of recreational ecstasy users, the integrative role of bioenergetic stress. Journal of Psychopharmacology. 20(2): p. 147-163.
21. Lieb, R., Schuetz, C., Pfister, H., von Sydow, K. and Wittchen, H., 2002. Mental disorders in ecstasy users: a prospectivelongitudinal investigation. Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 68: p. 195-207
22. Parrott, A.C., 2005. Chronic tolerance to recreational MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) or Ecstasy. Journal of Psychopharmacology. 19(1): p. 75-87.
23. Silins, E., Copeland, J. and Dillon, P., 2007. Qualitative review of serotonin syndrome, ecstasy (MDMA) and the use of other serotonergic substances: hierarchy of risk. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry. 41(8): p. 649-55.
24. Berney-Meyer, L., Putt, T., Schollum, J. and Walker, R., 2012. Nephrotoxicity of recreational party drugs. Nephrology. 17(2): p. 99-103.
25. Green, A.R., Mechan, A.O., Elliott, J.M., O'Shea, E. and Colado, M.I., 2003. The Pharmacology and Clinical Pharmacology of 3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA, "Ecstasy"). Pharmacological Reviews. 55(3): p. 463-508

© 2026 Positive Choices | Built by Netfront