Positive Choices
Drug and Alcohol Information
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Drugs a-to-z

Hallucinogens: 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: Hallucinogens

Tags: LSD, acid, magic mushrooms, tabs, peyote, salvia, psychedelics, mescaline, mushies

Time Allocated: Partial lesson (under 45mins)

Origin: Australian

Cost:
Free

What are Hallucinogens?

Hallucinogens (also known as psychedelics) are a group of drugs that change the way people see and feel reality, causing things like hallucinations. Hallucinations are experiences where people hear or see things that aren't really there, or where perception is altered. For example, colours may be brighter and shapes may appear to be changing or moving. Users may also experience unusual or weird thoughts and feelings.

Hallucinogens can occur naturally or be synthetic. **The most commonly known synthetic hallucinogen is LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide), also known as acid, trips or tabs. Naturally occurring hallucinogens include magic mushrooms, DMT (Dimethyltryptamine), mescaline (found in peyote), or salvia.**

Personal Stories

"Me and a few mates decided to take a few tabs of acid. Fifty minutes later I collapsed and thought I saw shadows coming towards me. I was screaming and crying for help, but my friends were also high and unable to help."
-Alice, 16

How many young people have tried Hallucinogens?

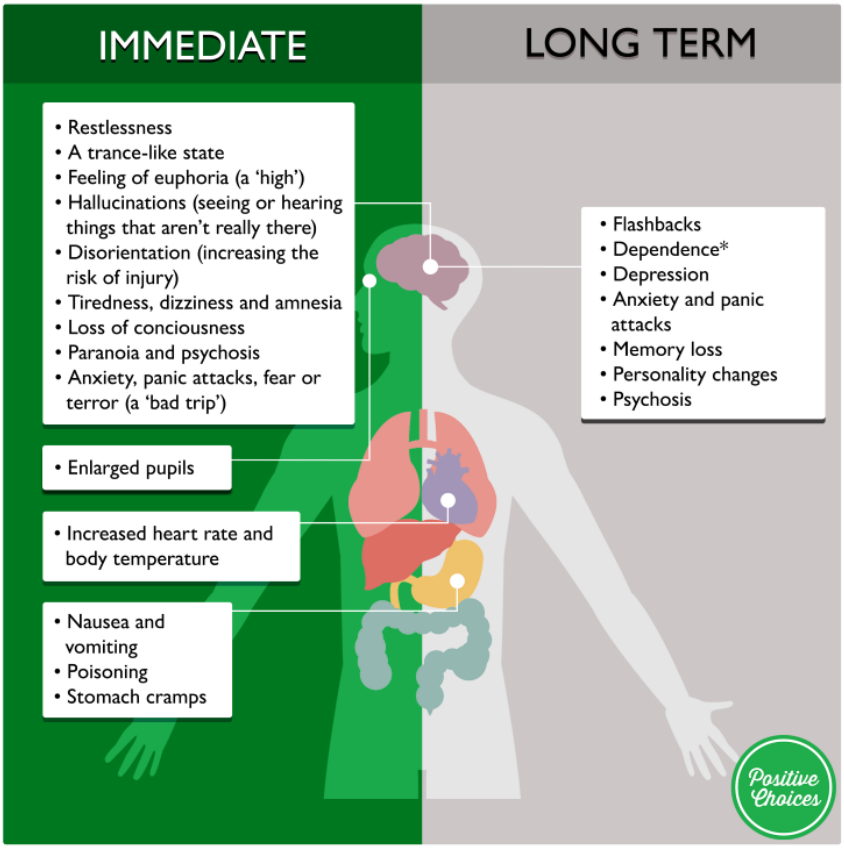
According to the 2022-2023 Australian secondary schools' survey, 1 in 100 students (1%) aged 12-17 used hallucinogens in the past month.

What are the effects of Hallucinogens?

The effects of hallucinogens are extremely unpredictable and changing, even if the person has used the same drug before. Factors that influence the drugs' effects include the person using (e.g. mood, personality), where the drug is taken, and the type of drug. Compared to some other drugs, hallucinogens appear to be less likely to cause dependence. However, there are reports of dependence and difficulties stopping use among a small number of people who use them regularly.

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

Immediate	Long-term
Increased heart rate and body temperature	Flashbacks (spontaneous recurrences of a specific experience). Sometimes these can last for days, weeks or sometimes even years after taking the drug
Enlarged pupils	Dependence (see glossary)
A trance-like state	Depression
Feeling of euphoria (a 'high')	Anxiety and panic attacks
Restlessness	Memory loss
Nausea and vomiting	Personality changes
Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't really there)	Psychosis (see glossary)
Stomach cramps	
Disorientation (increasing the risk of injury)	
Tiredness, dizziness and amnesia	
Anxiety, panic attacks, fear or terror (a 'bad trip')	
Loss of consciousness	
Paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious) and psychosis, lasting up to several hours after the drug effects have worn off	
Poisoning, particularly with magic mushrooms if the wrong type is used. This can be fatal	



** Compared to some other drugs, hallucinogens appear to be less likely to cause dependence. However, there are reports of dependence and difficulties stopping use among a small number of people who use them regularly.*

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.

- Credit to the Home Office for quotes adapted from Talk to Frank.

Sources

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