

# Ecstasy

Ecstasy (also known as Molly, E, XTC, Rave, Adam, or the love drug) is an illegal stimulant and hallucinogenic drug. Its chemical name is *3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine* (MDMA). It is made in illegal drug labs and usually sold in tablets which vary in shape, size, and colour. The tablets contain different amounts of ecstasy; some tablets may not contain any ecstasy while other tablets may contain different drugs and fillers such as cornstarch, soaps, and detergents. Even tablets that are stamped with a logo may contain fillers and other highly toxic drugs.

## Short-Term Effects

The effects of ecstasy depend on several factors such as: your age, weight, how much you take, how often you take it, how long you've been taking it, the method you use to take the drug and whether or not you have certain medical conditions.

After taking ecstasy, you might experience feelings of pleasure, well-being and be more social with others. You may also feel more energetic and confident. Using more ecstasy is unlikely to increase these effects but may actually intensify less negative effects even with small amounts of this drug. This may include: teeth grinding and jaw pain, decreased appetite, sweating, increased blood pressure and heart rate, anxiety or panic attacks, blurred vision, nausea, vomiting and convulsions. After the effects of ecstasy wear off, a person can be irritable, anxious and paranoid. A person's memory may be impaired and he/she may feel depressed and confused.

**Ecstasy may contain toxic drugs which can be lethal even in low doses.**

**Ecstasy use can cause severe dehydration and heat exhaustion, abnormal heart rhythms, and liver failure which can lead to death.**

## Long-Term Effects

You can experience mood changes and disrupted sleep patterns. You might also become anxious and depressed and develop flashbacks, delusions, hallucinations and psychotic symptoms. Using ecstasy over a longer period of time may cause you to lose weight and become exhausted and fatigued.

**Research shows that ecstasy may damage the human brain, affecting your memory and ability to learn.**

## How does it work?

Ecstasy is usually swallowed or snorted but it can also be injected. After taking ecstasy, the drug is absorbed into the bloodstream and travels to the brain. The drug changes the chemicals in the brain that control mood, sleep, and appetite. The effects of a single dose of the drug usually begin within an hour and may last for three to six hours.

## Ecstasy and Dependency

After using ecstasy regularly, you may become psychologically dependent on the drug (you feel you need it). There is not enough evidence to determine if ecstasy results in physical dependence or withdrawal symptoms.

However, you may quickly become tolerant to ecstasy – the more often you take it, the less the drug will affect you, and taking more of it may not produce the same high.

**Regular use of ecstasy can damage your liver.**

## Did you know?

“Herbal ecstasy” is not the same as ecstasy because it does not contain MDMA. However, it contains ephedrine, a stimulant that when misused is dangerous because it is associated with increased risk of stroke, heart attack and death.

Some research suggests that using ecstasy during pregnancy could harm a developing fetus, resulting in long-term impairments to learning and memory.

**Combining ecstasy with other drugs (such as those used to treat depression or HIV) can cause toxic reactions.**

## Who can you contact if you need help regarding drug use?

Contact your local Addictions/Mental Health Services office, doctor or other health care provider if you need more information. To locate services near you:

- Visit [saskatchewan.ca/addictions](http://saskatchewan.ca/addictions).
- Visit HealthLine Online at [healthlineonline.ca](http://healthlineonline.ca).
- Call HealthLine at 811. Specially trained staff are available to provide mental health and addictions crisis support, in a safe and confidential manner.



*NOTE: This material is for information only and should not replace advice from an Addictions or Mental Health Counsellor, doctor or other health care provider.*

To access fact sheets sources please contact the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health at (306) 787-7239.