

# Ecstasy

(E, eckies, biscuits, pills)

Ecstasy can make you feel great increasing your energy and turning total strangers into your best friends. It can also cause depression long term. The greatest danger might even come from the amount of water you drink to keep cool.

Methylene-Dioxy-Meth-Amphetamine (MDMA), known as ecstasy, was patented in the early 1900s as an appetite suppressant. It is a Phenethylamine, having hallucinogenic (trippy) and stimulant (speedy) effects.

E is most available as pills, but also comes in capsules or powder. E is not always pure MDMA, it may contain MDA, MDEA, 2-CB etc, and often contains Ketamine, speed etc. The abundance of crap E in England has turned a lot of people off the drug (also see Ketamine and GHB re fake Es).

## Loved up on E (immediate effects):

The effect of E depends on the individual person (size, mood, health, etc), their experience with E or similar drugs, the amount taken and the actual make-up of the drug.

For example:

MDA is much longer lasting, far more trippy and less speedy than MDMA. Users report stiff joints and limbs.

MDEA is similar to MDMA in effect and duration, but more disorientating, speedier and not as blissful.

MBDB usually gives a very relaxing milder buzz, and is less speedy or visual than MDMA.

Anal suppository (shelving) or crushed and then snorted or smoked E can result in an intense, but short-lived, experience. If injected, E is very full-on and dangerous, especially if you don't know exactly what's in it! Women generally need less E to feel the effects, due to their smaller body weight.

The effects of orally taking a good quality E usually come on within 20 to 60 minutes. Initially you may be a bit sick, uneasy or spaced out, but this passes. The buzz then shifts to feelings of euphoria and being connected with others (loved up) with energy to party. The effects peak after

about 2 hours and body rushes are often experienced. Feelings of lesser intensity usually last 4 to 6 hours. Some residual effects may last longer.

Because E is manufactured illegally, it's likely to be mixed with other substances or may have toxic by-products from the manufacturing process. This can cause a range of unpleasant or harmful effects.

## Common effects of E (MDMA) include:

General stimulation of brain and nervous system (e.g. widened pupils, increased body temperature, increased blood pressure and heart rate, increased sweating, and initial anxiety).

- Feelings of euphoria.
- Increased sense of empathy or connection with others.
- Heightened sense of touch.
- Jaw clenching and/or teeth gritting (if speed has been added to E).
- Decreased awareness of fatigue, hunger and thirst.
- Dehydration or water retention problems.

## Overdose

Rare, but can occur if you have too many MDMA pills or an allergic reaction. Symptoms can include:

- Irrational behaviour
- Collapsing, fainting
- Fast heartbeat
- Very high blood pressure
- Vomiting (sometimes people can vomit in early stages and this is not serious by itself, if it passes)
- Hallucinations (including a sense of floating)
- Very high body temperature
- Fits (convulsions, seizures) can also be caused by strobe lights
- Death.

## Long-Term Effects

Although research has been done into the long-term risks of E use, there's no consensus yet on whether E damages short or long-term memory or

## Ecstasy, continued

learning ability. If you use E regularly (e.g. every weekend) you're likely to get emotionally and physically run down; as your natural immunity weakens you become susceptible to infections, colds, flu, etc. Taking a break from E use should help you regain your emotional and physical well-being.

NB. Ecstasy can be detected in the urine up to 2 to 4 days after use at common levels.

### Tolerance and dependence

Ecstasy might not be physically addictive but some people do get psychologically addicted to the euphoric effect. Overseas research suggests people do develop tolerance to ecstasy, with decreasing positive effects of using while the negative effects increase. In other words, the highs get smaller and shorter while the comedowns get harder to deal with. Keeping use to less than once every 4 to 6 weeks can help reduce both tolerance and chances of long-term negative impact as a serious reduction of serotonin.

### Dehydration and water intoxication

Deaths from E overdoses are very rare, but deaths from related dehydration, heat-stroke or water intoxication are more common and can be avoided.

Overheating/hyperthermia is reported to be the most common cause of ecstasy-related death because MDMA interferes with the regulation of body temperature. Overheating can cause internal bleeding, and liver and kidney failure.

Ecstasy triggers the release of ADH, a hormone that slows the action of the kidneys, so rather than excreting fluids you continue to fill up. This can lead to 'water intoxication' causing headache, nausea and vomiting. In rare cases it can cause coma and death due to the blood becoming diluted, low plasma sodium levels, and water being sucked into the brain cells causing increased pressure on the brain stem.

Symptoms of overheating include vomiting, hallucinations, really fast heartbeat and very high body temperature, dizziness, fainting, head pains and strong muscle cramps.

### Harm Reduction

No use is the safe choice.

Sip, not gulp, 600ml of water over every hour. Gulping water once you are already thirsty can be a risk. The potassium in isotonic sports drinks can increase blood pressure to unsafe levels. Avoid alcohol, caffeine and sugary drinks, which increase dehydration.

If you're not dancing and not sweating, you will not need a lot of fluids.

E can make you feel in love with a stranger. Remember basic safety issues including safe sex.

Avoid E if you have heart, liver or kidney problems, epilepsy or asthma.

Avoid combining with alcohol or mixing drugs because this produces unpredictable effects and is a greater health risk, putting a huge strain on the heart and liver.

Avoid taking E if you are taking medication such as beta blockers. Consult your doctor about taking E with medication.

If you're diabetic, insulin levels can be affected and you may need to monitor blood sugar levels more regularly.

E can cause a bad reaction if you have an anxiety or psychotic disorder or suffer panic attacks.

If you're taking more and more to get up, it's safer to take a break for a few months.

Ecstasy testing kits can reveal what drugs E pills may contain (e.g. dangerous DXM and PMA). However, the tests will not show up all drugs or chemicals present.

For more info on what specific pills may contain, see [www.ecstasydata.org](http://www.ecstasydata.org) and the Australia/NZ section of [www.pillreports.com](http://www.pillreports.com).

**We recommend that you contact the Community Alcohol and Drug Services (CADS). CADS are a free, confidential service to support people to make informed choices, and reduce the risks of their alcohol and other drug use. Contact them on 845 1818 or [www.cads.org.nz](http://www.cads.org.nz).**