

Hallucinogens

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Hallucinogens are drugs that change how the user's brain perceives time and reality.

The drugs affect how the user moves, reacts to situations, thinks, hears and sees.

Hallucinogens — LSD, PCP, psilocybin, mescaline, DXM, AMT and Foxy — can cause the user to hear voices, see images and feel things that do not exist.

Hallucinogens affect the area of the brain that controls behavior, perception and self-control. They also lead to an increase in heart rate and blood pressure, can cause heart and lung failure, and lead to a coma.

Emotionally, hallucinogens can cause the user to feel confused, suspicious and disoriented. Long-term use can cause depression, anxiety, delusions and panic. Users can develop a tolerance to hallucinogens. This means they need more of the drug each time to get the same effect. The drugs can also cause the brain to have flashbacks, effects that can occur months and years after use.

The 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health estimates that nearly 1.2 million U.S. people aged 12 and older were current hallucinogen users.

LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide)

LSD is the most widely used hallucinogen. Made from lysergic acid (found in a fungus that grows on rye and other grains), LSD produces changes to the user's senses and changes in perception, thought and mood.

LSD is known as "acid," "blotter," "dots" and "window pane," among many others. Street dealers sell LSD in tablets, capsules and as a liquid. It is usually swallowed. LSD is often added to absorbent paper and divided into small colorful squares.

Effects begin within 30 to 90 minutes of taking a single dose. The effects are unpredictable, depending on the amount of drug taken; the user's personality, mood and expectations; and the surroundings. Effects can last up to 12 hours. LSD can cause:

- physical effects: dilated pupils, higher body temperature, increased heart rate and blood pressure, sweating, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, dry mouth and shaking (tremors)
- loss of self-control
- rapid shifts in emotions
- intense colors, smells, sounds and other sensations.

If taken for a long time, LSD can cause psychosis (distortion of a user's ability to recognize reality, think rationally or communicate with others) or flashbacks (hallucinations, and seeing false motion, bright or colored flashes).

PCP (Phencyclidine)

PCP was created as a general anesthetic for surgery. Although it was used in veterinary medicine, it was never approved for humans. It produces a feeling of being "out of body" (disassociation). PCP is known as "angel dust," "boat," "tic tac" and "zoom," **(over)** among others.

PCP is a white powder that can dissolve in water. It can be mixed with dyes and often sold on the street in different colors as tablets, capsules, liquids or powders. PCP can be snorted, smoked or swallowed.

Effects begin within a few minutes of taking a single dose. With one use, users can feel detached from reality, such as distorted sense of space, time and body image; hallucinations, panic and fear; or feelings that nothing bad can happen (invulnerability). With high doses, dangerous changes in blood pressure, heart rate and breathing can occur. Users may become violent or think about suicide. Effects can last for many hours. PCP can cause:

- shallow, rapid breathing
- increased blood pressure, heart rate and temperature
- upset stomach (nausea), blurred vision, dizziness, decreased awareness.

High doses of PCP can cause convulsions, coma and death. PCP can cause withdrawal symptoms. Memory loss and depression may last for up to 1 year after a long-term user stops taking the drug.

Psilocybin

Psilocybin is found in certain mushrooms in the U.S., Mexico and South America, but it is also made in a lab. It produces hallucinations. Psilocybin is known as “magic mushrooms,” “mushrooms,” “musk” and “shrooms,” among others. Mushrooms that have psilocybin are sold fresh or dried. They can be eaten, added to food or brewed in a tea. Psilocybin is also a pill that can be swallowed. Once in the body, psilocybin is broken down to make psilocyn, another hallucinogen.

Effects begin within 20 minutes of taking a single dose and can last about 6 hours. Psilocybin can cause upset stomach, throwing up (vomiting), muscle weakness, drowsiness, nervousness and panic. Long-term effects of use include mental disorders and flashbacks.

Mescaline

Mescaline is an ingredient in peyote, a small, spineless cactus in the southwestern U.S., but it is also made in a lab. Mescaline produces hallucinations. On the street, it is known as “blue caps,” “buttons,” “cactus” and “cactus head,” among others. Short-term effects of use include altered states of perception and feeling, and upset stomach. Long-term effects of use include mental disorders and flashbacks.

DXM (Dextromethorphan)

DXM is a legal cough-suppressing ingredient used in over-the-counter cough and cold medicines. In small doses, it produces a mild stimulant effect with the user seeing colors, swirls or similar things with the eyes closed. In large doses (10 ounces or more), it produces the feeling of being out of one’s body (known as disassociation). The effects of DXM, also known as “robo.” last up to 6 hours. Risks include increased body temperature, abdominal pain, throwing up, irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure, seizures, brain damage and death.

AMT (Alpha-methyltryptamine) and Foxy (5-MeO-DIPT)

AMT and foxy are sometimes used by young adults in raves and clubs. AMT is often found in tablet and capsule form. Foxy, also known as “Foxy Methoxy,” is available in powder, capsule and tablet. Usually taken by mouth, the drugs can be snorted or smoked. These drugs produce euphoria, emotional distress, empathy, hearing and seeing things, upset stomach, throwing up and diarrhea. Effects from 20 mg of AMT last between 12 to 24 hours. Effects from 6 to 10 mg of Foxy last 3 to 6 hours.

Information adapted from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, the National Women’s Health Information Center, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the National Institute on Drug Abuse.