

ECSTASY

History	<p>Ecstasy was originally the street name for the compound 3-4 Methylenedioxy-n-methylamphetamine (MDMA). MDMA is part of a large group of drugs - the phenylethylamines (which relates to their core molecular structure). Related products include MDA, MDE, MDBD, DOM. Several hundred phenylethylamines have been synthesised.</p> <p>Ecstasy (also known by its chemical name MDMA) is often seen as the original designer drug because of its high profile links to dance music culture in the late 80s and early 90s. Clubbers took ecstasy to feel energised, happy, to stay awake and to dance for hours.</p> <p>Ecstasy is often described as a new drug but it was first produced as long ago as the 1930s. Having been used as an appetite suppressant and a military brainwashing drug ecstasy experienced a renaissance in the 60s and 70s as a tool for psychotherapy and then made the jump into the club scene. It was only made illegal in the USA in 1985 though had been illegal in the UK far longer.</p> <p>Ecstasy is derived from naturally occurring chemicals found in trees <i>Sassafras Albidum</i> or <i>Ocotea Pretiosa</i>. While the processes involved are well documented they are beyond the means of most amateur chemists, requiring both equipment and chemicals that are expensive or subject to license. UK-bought ecstasy is produced both in the UK and mainland Europe in illegal laboratories.</p>
Street name	Tabs, pills, eccies, E, XTC, Doves, Apples, Mitsubishis and numerous others
Type	
Drug Effect	<p>A warm sense of wellbeing and contentment, intense happiness, increase in pulse rate, feeling warm or flushed, feeling restless, anxious or paranoid, tightness and clenching of the jaw muscles, dilated pupils, an increase in energy, feeling of friendliness towards others, dilated pupils, suppression of appetite, lack of desire to sleep, enhanced appreciation of visual and auditory stimulus, visual distortion, decreased desire to urinate. Effects start to appear 30 minutes after ingestion and last for 3 to 5 hours. Can cause nausea.</p>
Dependency	Not physically addictive but tolerance and psychological dependence may develop.
Description	Pure MDMA comes as a white powder. Due to the number of different places that produce ecstasy, appearance is very varied. Most commonly comes as

	<p>tablets or capsules. Tablets may be white, off white, yellow, speckled, rough, smooth, scored, imprinted with designs or plain</p> <p>Capsules come in many colours including plain white, black and red, yellow and purple. The appearance of tablets or capsules often gives rise to their names; tablets imprinted with pictures of apples are called apples, those imprinted with doves were called doves and so on. This sort of branding, initially designed to make good E's distinguishable from bad ones, is no guide to quality. Once a brand is established, other producers copy the design but may not copy the content.</p>
<p>Street use</p>	<p>Ecstasy pills are usually swallowed although some people do crush them up and smoke or snort them. MDMA powder can be dabbed onto the gums or snorted.</p> <p>Ecstasy was initially a relatively expensive drug in the UK, selling for between £10-20 per tablet. But over the past few years cost has dropped massively with most tablets selling for £1-2 or less. MDMA powder can be more expensive, selling at between £30-50/gm.</p>
<p>Withdrawal</p>	<p>The comedown from ecstasy can make people feel lethargic and depressed. Evidence suggests long-term users can suffer memory problems and may develop depression and anxiety.</p>
<p>Long term use</p>	<p>Much has been made of the health risks attached to ecstasy use, especially of ecstasy-related deaths. While much research is still on-going, the following health risks are apparent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Toxic or allergic reactions to ecstasy itself; some people are sensitive or allergic to ecstasy and such sensitivity can result in illness or death. ▪ A toxic or allergic reaction to substances that have been sold in place of ecstasy; this includes reactions to both similar substances (e.g. MDA) but also to other substances such as penicillin or other substances. ▪ Injury or fatality caused by the effects of ecstasy; examples include people with heart conditions who have heart attacks as a result of taking ecstasy. ▪ Heatstroke: a risk especially when ecstasy is taken in a hot night club, especially if the user is dancing a lot. Heatstroke can cause death as internal organs cease working. Anyone with a heart condition, blood pressure problems, epilepsy or asthma can have a very dangerous reaction to the drug. ▪ Water intoxication; in an attempt to reduce the risks of heatstroke a user may drink lots of water. The combination of drinking too much water and restricted kidney function due to ecstasy can cause levels of fluid within the brain to increase leading to unconsciousness, coma, and possible death.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The triggering of other conditions: ecstasy has been linked to a number of conditions which may have previously been latent and triggered by taking ecstasy. Evidence is strong, for example that ecstasy can trigger epilepsy in some individuals. ▪ Long-term psychiatric damage: some users have experienced long-term depression after using ecstasy. This is more common in regular users. There is some evidence that ecstasy use, especially long-term use, adversely affects neurotransmitter transmission systems in the brain. ▪ Long-term damage to internal organs has not been discounted; organs considered by some to be at risk include the liver, kidneys, heart and brain.
<p>Overdose</p>	<p>There've been over 200 ecstasy-related deaths in the UK since 1996. Some involve other substances sold as ecstasy such as PMA. Ecstasy affects the body's temperature control. Dancing for long periods in a hot atmosphere, like a club, increases the chances of overheating and dehydration. However drinking too much can also be dangerous. Ecstasy can cause the body to release a hormone which stops it making urine. Drink too quickly and it affects your body's salt balance which can be as deadly as not drinking enough water. Users should sip no more than a pint of water or non-alcoholic drink every hour.</p>
<p>Legal Status</p>	<p>Class A, Schedule 1</p>