

# Ecstasy



## Contact Us

Please contact us for further information.

Centre for Student Development and Counselling

416-979-5195

[www.ryerson.ca/counselling](http://www.ryerson.ca/counselling)

Authors: Jeff Danosh, Ankita Gandhi, Shajan Navaratnarajah,

Yathusha Rameshshanker

Series Editors: Kelly McShane, Amy Brown, Amelia Usher



Community Engaged  
Learning & Teaching  
Student Experience Centre  
Faculty of Arts

Faculty of Arts

Faculty of Arts  
Department of Psychology

Front cover photo credit: [www.freeimages.co.uk](http://www.freeimages.co.uk)

RYERSON  
UNIVERSITY

Everyone Makes a Mark

# What is Ecstasy?

Ecstasy, otherwise known as MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxy-N-methylamphetamine), E, love drug, Adam, is a drug that induces pleasurable feelings like euphoria. The drug is illegal in Canada and is a derivative of amphetamine and similar to methamphetamine. It is synthetically made and usually comes in pill or tablet form. Ecstasy can be sniffed, snorted, injected, smoked, or taken orally.

## Deceptively Safe Looking:

Ecstasy pills or tablets often look like prescription drugs, which can give people the misconception that the pills or tablets have passed manufacturing safety standards. In reality, manufacturing of ecstasy is unregulated and the pills may be combined or cut with unknown substances which when ingested can be dangerous and fatal. Due to the fact that ecstasy is laboratory made, its purity depends on the producers.

### How is Ecstasy Misused?

Users do not typically become physically dependent upon ecstasy, but they can become behaviourally dependent upon it. Behavioural dependence is when a person repeatedly does something (i.e., takes ecstasy when they go to a club), which causes serious negative consequences. Ecstasy is commonly ingested at clubs, raves, and parties to get high and for mood elevation. When this becomes a regular pattern, this can be considered behavioural dependency.

The use of ecstasy is often accompanied by negative psychological (e.g. depression) and physiological symptoms (e.g., heart rate changes). Also, using in club and rave-like settings can enhance the toxic effects of ecstasy consumption, increasing chances of serious health risks and death. Continued use in the face of these consequences can be considered misuse of the drug.

### How Common is Ecstasy Use?

Ecstasy is the 5th most commonly consumed illicit drug in Canada with cannabis, hallucinogens, cocaine, and speed being the four most often used. About 4% of Canadians over the age of 15 have used ecstasy in their lifetime. Use of ecstasy is most common in young adults between 18 and 24 years of age. In Canada, use of ecstasy in males is about twice as high as use in females and use in youth is about triple the use in adults.

Globally, the prevalence of ecstasy use is slowly surpassing amphetamines as the second most used drug in the world (behind marijuana).

### What are the Effects of Using Ecstasy?

Legal Consequences: Ecstasy is a controlled substance and is illegal to use in Canada and several other countries. So being caught possessing or using ecstasy without a medical prescription, being caught manufacturing or selling ecstasy can result in jail time and a hefty fine.

Although there are several immediate positive and pleasurable effects that can be experienced after taking ecstasy, like producing feelings of intimacy, confidence, and boosting adrenaline, there are also many short-term and long-term negative physical and psychological effects.

### Short-Term Effects (after the euphoria wears off):

- Psychological: Anxiety, hallucinations, depression, impaired concentration, paranoia, depersonalization, feelings of suicidality.
- Physiological: Fatigue, insomnia, body aches, hypertonicity, restlessness, jaw soreness due to teeth grinding, vertigo, tremors, diarrhea, pupil dilation, loss of appetite, high heart rate, dry mouth, hot/cold flashes, sweaty palms, heart failure, and multiple organ failure.
- Due to certain neurological effects that ecstasy has on the brain, use can result in an inability of the body to regulate normal body temperature. This can result in hyperthermia (high body temperature), which can then lead to heart and other organ failure.

### Long-Term Effects:

- Insomnia, depression, headaches, muscle stiffness, and short-term memory impairment.

### How is Ecstasy Addiction Treated?

There are currently no pharmacological treatments for ecstasy abuse or dependence.

Treatments exist that target dependence by trying to change the person's perspective, expectations, and thought processes about the drug. Cognitive therapy targets stressors in the person's life, such as relationships and work, in order to reduce a sense of needing the drug. Psychotherapy treatments may also target depression because people who are depressed often take ecstasy to experience relief from their depression. Drug treatments such as antidepressants may be used in these cases as a way to alleviate symptoms of depression so that the person does not feel the need to seek out the mood enhancing effects of ecstasy as much. Combinations of drug and psychotherapy may also be helpful in treating ecstasy abuse or dependence.