

LSD



Contact Us

Please contact us for further information.

Centre for Student Development and Counselling

416-979-5195

www.ryerson.ca/counselling

Authors: Aafreen Hassan, Monika Madik, Tetyana Makar, Farah Refai, Conor Rose, Emilie Trottier

Series Editors: Kelly McShane, Amy Brown, Amelia Usher

Consultants: Reena Tandon, Diana Brechner



Community Engaged Learning & Teaching
Student Experience Centre
Faculty of Arts

Faculty of Arts

Faculty of Arts
Department of Psychology

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What is LSD?

Hallucinogens are a class of drugs that cause hallucinations and distort perceptions of reality. Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) aka "acid" is one of the most widely known hallucinogenic drugs, and is among the most potent. Other hallucinogenic drugs include psilocybin (Magic mushrooms), MDMA (Ecstasy), and phencyclidine (PCP). LSD is a colorless and odorless crystal that is usually ingested in the form of blotter paper that has been pre-soaked in the drug.

The History of LSD: An Accidental Discovery

Hallucinogenic compounds, commonly referred to as psychedelics – a term derived from the Greek words *psihi* and *dilosi* which translate into soul-manifesting – have had widespread spiritual and cultural applications for thousands of years. Many cultures throughout history, such as the native tribes of Peruvian Amazonia, have used hallucinogenic substances as a sacrament, believing that the state induced by them brought people closer to their deities, to nature, and to each other.

Lysergic Acid (LSD-25) was first synthesized by Swiss scientist Albert Hofmann in 1938 but it wasn't until 1943, when he spilled a small quantity of LSD onto his exposed skin, that he discovered the hallucinogenic effects of the drug.

Hallucinogens became quite popular in the early-to-mid 1960's. Ushered in by psychedelic gurus like Timothy Leary and Aldous Huxley, this class of drugs rode the tide of the hippie movement. However, shifting public views on the spirit of excess, free love, and radical new ideas contributed to increasingly negative public views on LSD, and the drug was made illegal in 1968.

In Westernized cultures today, LSD and other hallucinogens are mostly used for altering states of consciousness, spiritual insight, and enhancement of energy for dancing in clubs, parties, concerts and bars.

What are the Signs of LSD misuse?

It is more to define the misuse of psychedelics using the same definition you would use to define the misuse of other drugs because hallucinogens lack traditional addictive qualities. For example, physical dependence is highly unlikely, however, tolerance to the drug (e.g., the need for more of the drug to achieve the same high) can occur after a single use.

The following is a list of possible signs that someone is misusing LSD:

- Poor performance at school and work
- Prioritizing the drug over other things including safety
- Trouble with the law related to use of the drug
- Continued use despite adverse social consequences

How Common is LSD Use?

While LSD use in young adults increased from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s, use has been decreasing since the late 1990s (LSD use in youth decreased from 6.8% to 1.8% between the years of 1999 and 2009).

The Effects of LSD and other Hallucinogens: Trip or Trap?

The effects experienced by hallucinogens depend on the dose taken, the personality and mindset of the individual, and the environment they are in. In general, hallucinogens alter the sensory perception of users. Typical effects may include stimulation, pupil dilation, chilliness, flushed face, increased heart rate and blood pressure, delusional thoughts, paranoia, and hallucinations. Upon consumption of some hallucinogens, vision is strangely modified and individuals are likely to experience odd patterns of sight.

A phenomenon called synesthesia may occur when one sensory experience is transformed or fused with another. For example, one may see colors or taste sounds. Experiencing sensations that are not real can lead people to do things that put themselves and others in danger.

Prolonged use of LSD and other hallucinogens can lead to a significant serotonin depletion, which can lead to disturbances in mood and memory. Emotions and feelings are susceptible to rapid changes from bliss to horror in hallucinogen users. One of the most mystifying, yet fairly common effects of hallucinogens is the feeling of two strong and conflicting emotions such as happiness and sadness, pleasure and pain, uncertainty and clarity – all at the same time. Users also report altered sensations of

boundaries between one's body, space and time. Because of the impaired time sense, minutes may seem like hours and hours like days. People commonly describe their experience as being either a "good trip" or a "bad trip" and it is difficult to predict what the individual will experience.

Other adverse consequences of heavy hallucinogenic use include recurring "Flashbacks" or Hallucinogen Persisting Perception Disorder in which one experiences the intoxication symptoms such as visual hallucinations without consuming the substance. These flashbacks are often accompanied by unpleasant affects rather than the euphoria generally experienced during substance consumption.

Using hallucinogens in unpredictable settings with emotionally unstable or unpredictable people can contribute to feelings of intense panic, otherwise known as bad trips or psychedelic crises. This can lead people to harm themselves or others around them.

How is LSD Abuse Treated?

LSD Detox: Users are professionally monitored while weaning off the drug to avoid sudden withdrawal and negative symptoms.

Integrated Family Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Adolescents are taught relaxation techniques and learn to transfer their energy towards other distracting activities along with family. This form of therapy has proven to be most effective in reducing drug abuse.

Counselling: Sessions help with the bouts of depression that follow the highs derived from the use of LSD.

LSD Relapse Prevention: A long-term evaluation tool that helps to prevent users from succumbing to environments that may trigger relapse.

Interesting Fact:

Hallucinogens are sometimes used to treat other problems! For example, LSD and psilocybin are sometimes used to suppress cluster headaches, and ibogaine has been used to treat withdrawal symptoms from heavy opiate use.