

What you should know about MDMA and *party pills*



Do you use substances that are in the “party pills” family? This fact sheet gives you information on the risks, the effects, and the precautions to take.

What is MDMA?

Party pills are drugs composed of MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxy-N-methylamphetamine). MDMA is a derivative of methamphetamine, a drug produced in clandestine laboratories and sold on the black market.

MDMA excites the nervous system. It can also cause hallucinations (the impression of seeing things that aren't there).

What forms does it come in?

MDMA, or MD, is sold in three forms:

- > Ecstasy, also called E, X, Ecsta, XTC, love pill or drug, etc.

These are tablets of different colours with different logos.

Their composition isn't always the same. They can contain other products (hallucinogens, methamphetamine, PCP, various drugs, detergents...).

- > Molly. This takes the form of crystals contained in capsules.
- > MDMA crystal powder or rocks to be crushed. Sometimes this is in a sheet of paper, called a “parachute”.

Why do people take MDMA?

It's most often associated with electronic music and the techno culture (rave parties, festivals).

People also take it at concerts or private parties, in bars, nightclubs, or other party places.

It can reduce fatigue caused by prolonged dancing. It also makes interacting with others easier.



What are its effects?

The effects are felt between an hour to an hour and a half after taking it. The main ones are:

- > Feelings of well-being and happiness (euphoria).
- > Easy interactions with others and the feeling of being close to them, especially on an emotional level.
- > Strong self-confidence and fewer inhibitions.
- > More intense emotions, pleasure, and sensations (especially touch).
- > Increased energy.

The effects last from 3 to 8 hours depending on the product and the person taking it.

What signs do we see in someone who has taken MDMA?

There are several visible signs:

- larger (dilated) pupils
- increased energy level
- profuse sweating due to higher body temperature
- teeth grinding and jaw tension
- decreased appetite

Is taking MDMA risky?

Taking too much of this product can cause:

- > agitation, panic, paranoia, severe depression, toxic psychosis
- > problems with kidney function (kidney failure)
- > heart rate problems
- > fever
- > seizures (contractions of certain muscles or of the whole body)



Can it cause death?

There have been deaths linked to taking MDMA. These can have a variety of causes:

- the presence of other substances in the product
- heat stroke due to a rise in body or room temperature
- dehydration (water loss) caused by not drinking enough fluids or consuming too much alcohol
- formation of blood clots in the veins

What is the “crash”?

This is a sensation that is experienced for several hours, or even several days, following the high. It can take the form of depression, anxiety, agitation, or irritability.



The person may also feel very tired and have trouble concentrating, making it hard to get through the day.

What is withdrawal?

It's the sensation experienced when the person stops using a product and is craving it (going “cold turkey”). This can cause depression and anxiety. Other symptoms include sleep problems (insomnia), panic attacks, agitation, psychosis (e.g., hallucinations, such as seeing or hearing things no one else sees or hears, or delusions, such as believing you can read people's minds), and paranoia.

The person may also feel tired, sad, bad-tempered, and have nightmares.

What are the short and long term effects of taking MDMA?

> Physical effects:

- muscle pain
- kidney or liver damage
- heart disease
- increased blood pressure
- brain damage, memory problems
- reduced sexual desire (libido)
- nausea, vomiting, and weight loss
- attention disorders

> Mental effects:

- insomnia
- depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts
- psychiatric disorders, such as paranoia, hallucinations, confusion



Can a person become addicted?

There is no physical addiction to MDMA. However, psychological addiction is possible. This happens when the person takes the product more often to feel good, boost their courage, or interact with others.

Also, an addicted person can become “tolerant”, which means the product has less of an effect on them. Increased doses are needed to get the same effects. Sometimes the person is no longer able to feel these effects.

What precautions should I take if I use this product?

Here are some recommendations:

- > **Know the risks.** Learn about them.
- > **Avoid injecting it.** If you do, use less risky techniques. Use sterile equipment and don't share.
- > **Practice safe sex.** Use condoms and lubricant. If you've had high-risk sex, see your doctor right away. He or she will have you tested for STIs. Some medications may reduce your risk of getting infected (e.g., PrEP for HIV).
- > **Eat and drink well.** But don't drink alcohol, as it will dehydrate you.
- > **Use it only with people you trust.**
- > **Get help** if you feel uncomfortable.
- > **Always buy your product from the same seller,** to avoid batches that are stronger or mixed. Also, you'll be able to get a product you've already tried.
- > **Don't mix it with other drugs.** This can greatly increase your health risks.
- > **Talk to a health professional** if you're taking medications. Some drugs, such as antidepressants, can increase health risks.
- > **Wait long enough for the effects to kick in.** If the effects are slow in coming, don't take another dose. You'll risk taking too much (cumulative effect).



- > **Make sure your health status doesn't increase your risks.** This could be the case, for instance, if you have epilepsy or diabetes.
- > **Take breaks** of a few hours between times when you take the product. Don't take it for several days in a row (bingeing).

Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

You can contact a member of your health care team or your pharmacist.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Support, information, etc., for people with substance use problems:

Drugs - Help and Referral.

> aidedroque.ca/en

TEL-AIDE:

Help line for substance use.

> **514 935-1101**

> telaide.org/en

TEL-JEUNES :

Listening and support line for youth

> **1 800 263-2266**

> **514 600-1002 (text)**

> teljeunes.com/Home

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our website

chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante



NOTEPAD



Questions



Resource people and contacts

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
chumontreal.qc.ca

