

Facts About LSD

What Are Hallucinogens?

Hallucinogens, or psychedelics, are drugs that affect a person's perception, sensations, thinking, self-awareness, and emotions. Hallucinogens include such drugs as LSD, mescaline, psilocybin, and DMT. Some hallucinogens come from natural sources, such as mescaline from the peyote cactus. Others, such as LSD, are synthetic or manufactured. PCP is sometimes considered an hallucinogen because it has some of the same effects. However, it does not fit easily into any one drug category because it also can relieve pain or act as a stimulant.

What is LSD?

LSD is manufactured from lysergic acid which is found in ergot, a fungus that grows on rye and other grains. LSD was discovered in 1938 and is one of the most potent mood-changing chemicals. It is odorless, colorless, and tasteless. LSD is sold on the street in tablets, capsules, and occasionally in liquid form. It is usually taken by mouth, but sometimes injected. Often it is added to absorbent paper, such as blotter paper, and divided into small decorated squares, with each square representing one dose. The average effective oral dose is from 30 to 50 micrograms, but the amount per dosage unit varies greatly. The effects of higher doses persist for 10 to 12 hours. Tolerance develops rapidly.

What Are Some Other Psychedelic Drugs?

Psilocybin comes from certain mushrooms. It is sold in tablet or capsule form so people can swallow it. The mushrooms themselves, fresh or dried, may be eaten. DMT is another psychedelic drug that acts like LSD. Its effects begin almost immediately and last for 30-60 minutes.

What Are The Effects Of Psychedelics Like LSD?

The effects of psychedelics are unpredictable. It depends on the amount taken, the user's personality, mood, and expectations, and the surrounding in which the drug is used. Usually the user feels the first effects of the drug 30-90 minutes after taking it. The physical effects include dilated pupils, higher body temperature, increased heart rate and blood pressure, sweating, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, dry mouth, and tremors. Sensations and feelings change too. The user may feel several different emotions at once, or swing rapidly from one emotion to another. Sensations may seem to "cross over," giving the user the feeling of "hearing" colors and "seeing" sounds. All of these changes can be frightening and can cause panic.

What Are "Bad Trips"?

Having a bad psychological reaction to LSD and similar drugs is common. The scary sensation may last a few minutes or several hours, and be mildly frightening or terrifying. The user may experience panic, confusion, suspiciousness, anxiety, feeling of helplessness, and loss of control. Sometimes taking a hallucinogen such as LSD can unmask mental or emotional problems that were previously unknown to the user. Flashbacks, in which the person experience a drug's effects without having to take the drug again, can occur.

What Are The Effects Of Heavy Use?

Research has shown some changes in the mental functions of heavy users of LSD, but they are not present in all cases. Heavy users sometime develop signs of organic brain damage, such as impaired memory and attention span, mental confusion, and difficulty with abstract thinking. These signs may be strong or they may be subtle. It is not yet known whether such mental changes are permanent, or if they disappear when LSD use is stopped.