

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ECSTASY



In a relatively short time, Ecstasy, the common name for the drug MDMA, has secured a prominent place for itself in the world of substance abuse. Teen experimentation with Ecstasy in America has exceeded or matched experimentation with cocaine, crack, heroin LSD and methamphetamine.

Yet, for many parents, Ecstasy remains a mystery. This booklet aims to change that by telling you about Ecstasy and its dangers. It also provides tips on the warning signs that your child could be using Ecstasy - and it will remind you of the tools you possess as a parent that can help keep your child drug free.



Partnership for a Drug-Free America®

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WHAT IS ECSTASY?

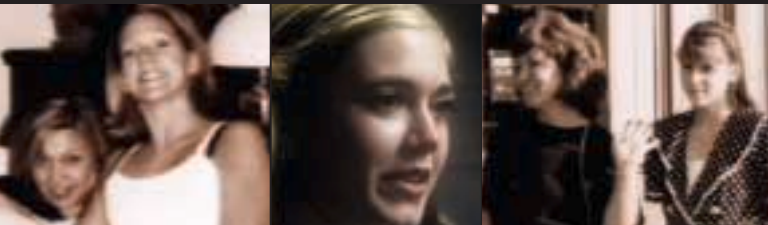
Half of all parents in America don't know the effects of Ecstasy. Many are unsure what's in the drug.

Ecstasy is a dangerous, illegal drug that increasingly has been embraced by American teens. Chemically, Ecstasy is known as MDMA, short for 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine. Usually taken orally in the form of a pill, Ecstasy is a synthetic, psychoactive drug with both stimulant (amphetamine-like) and hallucinogenic (LSD-like) properties.

Just as those who traffic in LSD have used cartoon characters and familiar logos to make their product appealing, those trafficking in Ecstasy have shown similarly keen skills and instincts for tapping into the teen market.

Ecstasy pills are usually about the size of an aspirin and, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration, they have been manufactured with more than 150 different dye stamps. Many of these stamps carry familiar corporate logos or recognizable cartoon figures.

Slang or "street" names for Ecstasy include: "X," "E," "XTC," "Roll," "Adam," "Bean," the "Hug Drug" and the "Love Drug."

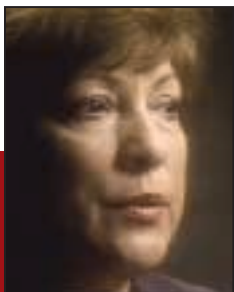


HOW DANGEROUS IS ECSTASY?

The hard truth is no one knows the extent to which Ecstasy will affect them. More than two dozen Americans have died as a result of taking Ecstasy in recent years.

Ecstasy can cause severe dehydration, seizures and strokes. It can cause dramatic increases in body temperature and can lead to muscle breakdown, which can cause kidney failure. It can lead to liver and cardiovascular failure, which have been reported in some of the Ecstasy-related fatalities.

Perhaps the biggest concern about Ecstasy is its effect on the brain. Initially, Ecstasy users get a euphoric feeling due to the release of a chemical in the brain called serotonin. However, repeated use of Ecstasy ultimately may damage the cells that produce serotonin, which has an important role in the regulation of mood, appetite, pain, learning and memory. There already is research suggesting Ecstasy use can disrupt or interfere with memory.



“When the coroner came to that office, I said, ‘What is Ecstasy?’”

— Elsa Heird, whose daughter Danielle died of an Ecstasy overdose on July 20, 2000.

WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS OF ECSTASY USE?

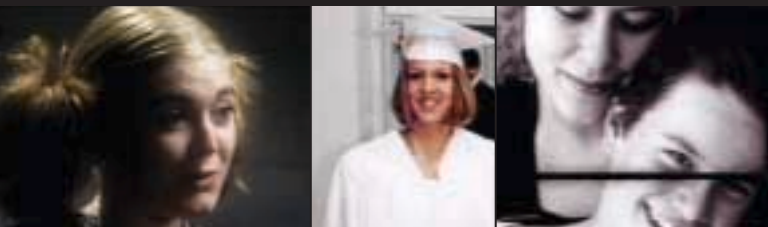
One of the toughest things about Ecstasy for parents is that often there are no clear symptoms to tell them their children are using the drug. However, there are some general warning signs you can watch for.

Signs your child could be using drugs include: changes in his peer group; changes in her sleeping pattern; declining grades; a loss of interest in his hobbies or favorite activities; a lack of motivation; a hostile, uncooperative attitude; and the unexplained disappearance of household money.

Signs your child could be using Ecstasy include: dehydration; clenching of the jaw and/or grinding of teeth; a sore jaw; unusual displays of affection; pronounced mood swings; a loss of inhibitions; transfixion on sights and sounds; chills or sweating; muscle tension; nausea; confusion; difficulty concentrating; tremors; sleep problems; severe anxiety and/or panic attacks and depression.

In addition to the physical signs, you can watch for the presence of paraphernalia associated with Ecstasy use. Items that may be linked to Ecstasy use by your child include:

- Pacifiers
- Lollipops
- Candy necklaces
- Glow sticks and/or glowing jewelry
- A child-like backpack
- Mentholated rub
- Surgical-type masks



While they look innocent, each of the items emerged around Ecstasy use for a reason: pacifiers and lollipops are often used to help Ecstasy users guard against the teeth grinding that comes from involuntary jaw clenching. Candy necklaces are sometimes used to hide Ecstasy pills (bags of small candies also are good for this purpose) and the glow sticks, mentholated rub and surgical masks often are used by those on Ecstasy to overstimulate their senses.

Both Ecstasy and the paraphernalia associated with it have moved beyond the rave scene, so while their presence does not necessarily indicate either rave attendance or Ecstasy use, parents should not automatically dismiss them as innocent.

“I would
have given
anything for
some warning
signs.”

– Jim Heird,
Danielle’s father



WHAT CAN I DO TO KEEP MY CHILD FROM USING ECSTASY?

Drug use is a decision – a decision you can influence. Time and again, the Partnership Attitude Tracking Study - the largest-body of research tracking the attitudes of parents and kids toward drugs - has found one of the most critical influences on kids' decisions about taking drugs is the input of parents. In fact, kids who say they learn a lot about the risks of drugs at home are approximately 50 percent less likely to use drugs.

Monitoring your children is an important way you can help them remain drug free. Monitoring is knowing where your children are, what they're doing and who they're doing it with and asking them questions regularly.

Four basic questions can help you keep the lines of communication open and let your children know you're interested in their lives:

Who?

Who will you be hanging out with after school today?

What?

What will you be doing?

When?

When will you be home?

Where?

Where are you going to be?

Will your children – especially older kids - roll their eyes at all these questions? Maybe. Will they test your limits? Probably. Will they claim you're invading their privacy and demand to be left alone? Almost certainly - but keep at it. They may roll their eyes or shrug their shoulders, but no matter what they say, your children are counting on you to be the grown-up.



WHAT IF I THINK MY CHILD IS USING ECSTASY?

If you think your son or daughter is using Ecstasy - or any illegal drug - watch for the warning signs noted earlier in this booklet. Then, talk with your child and voice your concerns.

Remember, you don't want to make direct accusations. Stay calm and rational during your discussion. Ask a lot of questions and do a lot of listening. Remember, the warning signs of drug use could be connected to emotional problems or physical illnesses not related to drug use. You may want to discuss the possibilities with a doctor, and consider taking your son or daughter in for a physical exam to see if a medical condition exists.



“Ecstasy tore my family apart, and my life apart.”

—Anthony, now 18, was released from juvenile detention in early 2002 and is working hard to get his life back on track.

I KNOW MY CHILD IS USING ECSTASY AND NEEDS HELP - NOW WHAT?

Substance abuse is a serious problem; don't be shy about asking for help in dealing with it. For referral to a treatment program near you, call the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment's National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service at 1-800-662-4357.

The source for information in this document is the National Institute on Drug Abuse. For multiple copies of this brochure, call 1-866-XTC FACTS. For more information on Ecstasy, other drugs of abuse or ways to talk with your kids about drugs, visit the Partnership for a Drug-Free America at

www.drugfreeamerica.org

For more information and tools you can use to help prevent drug use, visit the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at www.health.org.

The Partnership for a Drug-Free America thanks the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information for their assistance in distributing this information.



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“She tried Ecstasy and paid the ultimate price... Her life—and ours.”

— Elsa Heird

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