

Ecstasy Abuse

What is ecstasy?

Ecstasy is an illegal man-made drug. Other names for ecstasy include MDMA, Adam, XTC, clarity, E, essence, eve, lover's speed, roll, and Stacy.

Ecstasy is known as a party drug, often used at all-night dance parties called raves. Users of the drug say that it makes them feel very calm, relaxed, and self-confident while it increases energy.

Ecstasy is usually taken in tablet form. A powder form of it may be snorted or smoked. It is not usually injected. The effects start about 20 minutes after you use it and can last for 4 to 6 hours.

What causes ecstasy abuse?

When you first start using the drug, you do it to feel good. You may have strong cravings for the drug or need more of the drug to get high and feel good. You may not be able to decrease or stop using the drug. You may spend a lot of time trying to get the drug. Abuse is when you keep using a drug even when it causes problems at school, work, or in relationships.

What are the symptoms?

Using ecstasy causes effects similar to using amphetamines and cocaine. These effects include:

- Increased heart rate, body temperature, and blood pressure
- Chills and sweating
- Tremors
- Teeth clenching that you can't control
- Muscle cramping
- Nausea
- Blurry vision
- Faintness
- Confusion
- Depression
- High energy and trouble sleeping
- Hallucinations
- Cravings
- Severe anxiety
- Paranoia
- Sexual arousal and the need to be touched

Ecstasy is not physically addictive. However, it does affect the body's ability to regulate itself. Using ecstasy constantly for days without eating, drinking, or sleeping can cause severe dehydration and exhaustion.

Repeated use of ecstasy can cause depression, anxiety, restlessness, irritability, trouble sleeping, memory loss, and attention problems. Memory loss may be permanent with repeated or long-term use of ecstasy.

In high doses, ecstasy can cause panic attacks, loss of consciousness, seizures, heart failure, and extreme heatstroke.

If you develop a rash that looks like acne after using ecstasy, you are at greater risk for severe side effects such as liver damage if you continue to use the drug.

How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will ask about your symptoms and drug use and examine you. A sample of your urine may be tested for drug use.

How is it treated?

Withdrawal from ecstasy is not life threatening and does not cause physically painful symptoms. However, for treatment to be successful, you must want to give up drugs. The most important parts of treatment are for you to admit that you have a problem and to be in a drug-free environment. You can join a self-help group or a therapy group, or be part of a supervised clinic program. You may need to be in the hospital for substance abuse treatment.

How can I take care of myself?

The best way to help yourself is to stop taking ecstasy.

- **Get support.** Talk with family and friends. Consider joining a support group in your area.
- **Learn to manage stress.** Ask for help at home and work when the load is too great to handle. Find ways to relax, for example take up a hobby, listen to music, watch movies, or take walks. Try deep breathing exercises when you feel stressed.
- **Take care of your physical health.** Try to get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night. Eat a healthy diet. Limit caffeine. If you smoke, quit. Avoid alcohol and drugs. Exercise according to your healthcare provider's instructions.
- Avoid situations where people are likely to use alcohol or drugs.
- **Check your medicines.** To help prevent problems, tell your healthcare provider and pharmacist about all the medicines, natural remedies, vitamins, and other supplements that you take.
- **Contact your healthcare provider or therapist** if you have any questions or your symptoms seem to be getting worse.

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