How Addictive Is MDMA

By The Professionals At Robert Alexander Center

Drugs can have a variety of names and MDMA is no different. Although they all have different names, the effects that this drug has on your brain and body are the same. And the effects can be devastating.

What is MDMA?

3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) is a synthetic drug that alters your mood and perception, this includes your awareness of surrounding objects and conditions. It is chemically similar to both stimulants and hallucinogens. When you take MDMA, it can produce feelings of increased energy, pleasure, emotional warmth, and distorted sensory and time perception. BZP (benzylpiperazine) is now also being used as a "legal form" of ecstasy.

Ecstasy usually comes in a small, colored tablet that may have a brand logo or cartoon character stamped on it. It can also come in a capsule, liquid, or powder form. It usually has a bitter taste. Normally it is taken orally as a tablet but there are forms of MDMA that can be taken through injection or by snorting.

What happens to your brain?

A person may experience the intoxicating effects of MDMA around 45 minutes of taking a single dose. Those effects include an enhanced sense of well-being, increased extroversion, emotional warmth, empathy toward others, and a willingness to discuss emotionally-charged memories. In addition, people report enhanced sensory perception as a hallmark of the MDMA experience.

MDMA increases the activity of three brain chemicals:

Dopamine — This chemical produces increased energy and activity.

Norepinephrine — This chemical increases heart rate and blood pressure. This is particularly risky for people with heart and blood vessel problems.

Serotonin — This chemical affects mood, appetite, sleep, and other functions. It also triggers hormones that affect sexual arousal and trust. The release of large amounts of serotonin likely causes the emotional closeness, elevated mood, and empathy felt by those who use MDMA.

What happens to your body?

High doses of MDMA can affect the body's ability to regulate temperature. This can lead to a spike in body temperature that can occasionally result in liver, kidney, or heart failure or even death. MDMA can also cause a number of adverse health effects. For example, while fatal overdoses on MDMA are rare, they can potentially be life-threatening. Symptoms can include high blood pressure (otherwise known as hypertension), faintness, panic attacks, and in severe cases, they can cause a loss of consciousness and seizures.

Other health effects include:

- **Nausea**
- **Muscle Cramping**
- **Involuntary Teeth Clenching**
- **Blurred Vision**
- **Chills**
- **Sweating**

In addition, because MDMA can promote trust and closeness, its use, especially combined with other drugs such as sildenafil, may encourage unsafe sexual behavior. This increases people's risk of contracting or transmitting HIV/AIDS or hepatitis and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Is MDMA addictive?

Research results vary on whether MDMA is addictive. Experiments have shown that animals will self-administer MDMA, and this is an important indicator of a drug's abuse potential. Although, this is to a lesser degree than some other drugs such as cocaine. However, ecstasy can be mixed with cocaine and other substances to change or increase its potency.

The fact that most ecstasy pills contain unknown substances is dangerous because people taking the drug don't know for sure what they are ingesting or how their bodies will react. Another danger is that potential interactions can occur between the ingredients as well as any other substances people use with MDMA such as alcohol, medications, or other drugs. So, although MDMA might not be as addictive, it is potentially dangerous because of the unknown ingredients.

Some people report signs of addiction, including the following withdrawal symptoms:

- **Fatigue**
- **Loss of Appetite**
- **Depression**
- **Trouble Concentrating**

This can suggest that people develop a tolerance to ecstasy after repeated use. When tolerance occurs, people must increase the amount of the substance they take to feel the same effects that they initially experienced. How long ecstasy lasts and stays in your system depends on several factors including metabolism, body mass, hydration levels, and food intake.

The effects of the drug usually start within 30 minutes of consumption and the "high" lasts from three to six hours. Ecstasy impacts many of the same neurotransmitter sites that are targeted by other addictive substances. Again, this might be because of the other items that have been mixed in to make the tablets rather than tolerance or withdrawal from MDMA itself.

If you have been affected by drugs and would like to speak to someone, our friendly staff are on hand to answer your questions.

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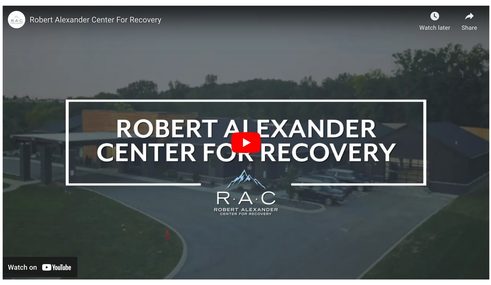
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