

Party Poopers

'Party drugs' may imply lots of harmless fun, but the truth is anything but, with drugs such as ecstasy and ice having serious side effects.

For a long time cocaine and cannabis were the drugs of choice for people hitting clubs and parties. More recently, however, ecstasy and ice have become regulars on the club scene, and each come with their own health hazards.

Ecstasy

Ecstasy is a street term for a range of drugs that have a similar structure. Most commonly found in tablet form, this stimulant and hallucinogen has an energising effect, creates distortion in time and perception, and enhances enjoyment from tactile experiences.

Bad News: Often made by 'backyard chemists', ecstasy can contain a variety of amphetamine-related substances that further increase the risks of taking the drug. The recent death of a young woman was attributed to PMA, a strong psychedelic, contained in an ecstasy tablet.

Negative psychological effects include: anxiety, depression, confusion, hallucinations, aggression, lack of motivation, panic attacks, and paranoia.

Physical side effects include raised blood pressure, a rise in body temperature (most deaths have occurred from overheating after using the drug in a hot environment), faster heartbeat, skin tingles, sweating, and dilated pupils. Some people also experience unsteadiness, nausea, teeth grinding, muscle aches, stiffness, blurred vision, insomnia, and fatigue.

While many users perceive ecstasy as a safe drug, this is at odds with the increasing evidence of its long-term effects.

Research indicates reduced memory and cognitive ability, neurotoxicity (damage to brain cells), and depression are more likely to be problems for ecstasy users. One UK study found people who had used the drug were more prone to making mistakes when processing information at work, and appeared to be unable to cope with high levels of cognitive demand.

Crystal methamphetamine

More commonly known as ice, this drug is a powerful synthetic stimulant drug, one that speeds up the messages going to and from the brain. It comes in the form of large, transparent crystals, and is snorted, swallowed, injected, or smoked.

The use of ice is growing rapidly among young Australians, which given the fact it is highly addictive, is of great concern to health authorities.

Some people choose ice as their 'party' drug because of the immediate feelings of euphoria and excitement, confidence, and increased libido. Others use it to help them stay awake or for improved performance.

It is a powerful stimulant, similar to amphetamines, but with more pronounced effects that can last from eight to 24 hours.

Bad News: Immediate effects include tremors of the hands, increased breathing rate, raised blood pressure, high body temperature, rapid and irregular heartbeat, and excessive sweating.

Other effects include difficulty sleeping, reduced appetite, dry mouth, stomach cramps and nausea, dizziness, blurred vision, and severe headaches.

Abrupt shifts in thought and speech can make someone using ice difficult to understand, while increased irritability, aggression, hostility, and 'amphetamine psychosis' can result in frightening and bizarre behaviour.

Over longer periods, the drug puts a great strain on the body, and is associated with stroke and heart-related complications such as heart attack and heart failure. Chronic sleep problems, depression, anxiety, tension, and a degree of brain damage are also evident in regular users.

Main source: DrugInfo Clearinghouse at druginfo.adf.org.au.



Published by: Healthworks®

PO Box 615, North Sydney

NSW 2059 Australia

ABN 13 081 605 709

Phone: 1300 90 10 90

Website: www.healthworks.com.au

Editorial Team:

Director: Ken Buckley MSc DipPE

Editor: Jenny Boss

Sub-Editor: Melanie Coe

Design: Linda Elliott

Marketing: Lisa Morris

Illustrations: Stan Farbman

Printing: Lewis Printing (02) 9672 1053

Subscriptions: Janelle Gibb

Email: well@healthworks.com.au

Healthworks® wellness, health, and safety products and solutions are a trademark of Worklife Solutions Pty Limited (ACN 081 605 709), registered in Australia.

Well at Work™ ©2007

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be re-sold, reproduced or copied in any form. Some of the quotes are provided by Bits & Pieces. The Economics Press Inc 12 Daniel Rd. Fairfield NJ 07004 (973) 227-1224.

The information in this publication does not provide medical advice for individual problems. For advice and treatment, consult your doctor or health care professional.

Stressed Out?

Can you identify with the 60 per cent of Australians who report that they suffer from stress? Are you one of the 25 per cent who take time off work due to the effects of stress?

We all need some stress in our lives. That's why we enjoy the adrenaline rush of roller coaster rides, scary movies, and adventure travel.

But when you start to notice symptoms like regular headaches, insomnia, and muscle tightness, and your friends and family begin to bear the brunt of your irritability and emotional outbursts, you know it's time to do something about your stress levels.

Stressed Out? is a new booklet published by Healthworks that offers an informal, user-friendly guide to identifying and treating stress.

For further information, check out healthworks.com.au.

Smoking marijuana before driving significantly increases the crash risk, even when there are no outward signs of impairment.