
JON DAILY, LCSW, CADC

www.recoveryhappens.com

February 2006 Newsletter: Ecstasy Resurgence

(916) 966-4523 ext. 4

We are seeing a new trend in teen and young adult drug use in our area: Ecstasy use is making a strong come back.

At the beginning of last year, I wrote a newsletter that discussed the current national trends in teen drug use and how they compared to our local trends. At that time, I discussed the rapid decline of ecstasy use in our area. The use of ecstasy really peaked as a popular drug of abuse 3 years ago. As a result of the alarming rate of ecstasy use many things happened to combat the epidemic.

To address the issue of ecstasy use national organizations such as, NIDA, NIAAA, Partnership for Drug Free America, and others tenaciously educated our country about the dangers of ecstasy use. We all saw the commercials, got brochures to attend seminars and trainings to educate ourselves about this issue. Teachers in jr. high and high schools were educated about it and so were the students in a big way. Moreover, with the alarming rate of use students began to see how it was affecting their peers. I remember meeting with many teens during that time who would tell me, I won't touch that stuff because my friend is now an "E-tard". They saw how it effected their friends physical, mental, social and academic health which resulted in the message that this drug can be harmful. It is my belief that the combination of these factors led to the decrease of ecstasy use in our area at the time. Now the pendulum is swinging once again.

With the decrease of use came the decrease of education about this drug in the media, at home and in our schools. Also, kids were no longer seeing the negative effects of this drug with their peers. With the slowed demand for "E" underground manufacturers and dealers found themselves stock piled with pills that were once rapidly selling for \$25.00 a pill.

(Contd.) In the last 6 months, more and more kids are reporting that they are using and that their friends are using this drug. Why ?

A: well much of the answer has already been alluded to in the previous paragraph, but I believe two other factors are playing into this resurgence of ecstasy use as well:

1., The price for a single dose of "E" was \$25.00 a pill. Now the price is \$6.00 - \$10.00 a pill. Also, kids are buying what are called "double stacked" and "triple stacked" pills for that price. "Double stacked" and "triple stacked" pills are pills that have double and triple the dose of a regular pill. You might wonder how dealers could drop the price so dramatically and still make a profit, but the cost to make each pill for large operations is only 20 cents. Keep in mind that a pill machine can produce 200,000 pills a day. That is almost a million pills a week. We are talking about well organized crime rings that are involved in the distribution (according to 60 Minutes).

2., Popular among some of today's youth is the song titled "Thizzle Dance" by Mac Dre. The song is about dancing while under the influence of ecstasy. Kids are coming into my office with talking about the song, asking me if I have listened to the song, and sometimes a kid might be in my office and their cell phone will ring with the Thizzle Dance song being played. Kids today hardly even refer to ecstasy as "E" anymore; they refer to it as "Thizz." In the past they would refer to being under the influence as "Rolling" and today the term is "Thizzing." So I think this song is a barometer of the trend as well as a perpetuator.

What are the street names for Ecstasy?

Some of the street names are: "E", "XTC", "vitamin E", "candy", "mind candy", "nikEs", "blue nikEs", "yellow bannans", "mitubishis", "007's", "double stacks".. They refer to the combination of LSD and Ecstasy as "Candy Flipping". They refer to the combination of Ecstasy and mushrooms as "Hippie Flipping". Currently the latest term is "Thizz" or "Thizzel" as illustrated in Mac Dre's popular song among today's youth, "Thizzel Dance"

Drug users refer to heavy Ecstasy users as "E-tards"

Where do people use Ecstasy? "Raves"

People who are using Ecstasy have in all likelihood attended or are very aware of "Raves". "Raves" are well organized parties held at warehouses or peoples houses in the past, but now they are less "underground" and are being held at clubs and other places. Tickets to "raves" can cost \$10.00 - \$30.00 each.

How do hallucinogens hijack the brain of adolescents?

Drugs in this classification effect the Central Nervous system by disrupting the neurotransmitter, serotonin. Serotonin, the neurotransmitter that keeps people from feeling depressed. Nonetheless, serotonin also serves as a filter for incoming sensory stimuli, i.e., screening unimportant or irrelevant information. Hallucinogens disrupt this process allowing a surge of sensory data.

People under the influence this drug will experience visual distortion, audio distortion, tactile distortion, and emotional distortion. Adolescents will report things like, "The picture in my house was breathing" or, "The blue picture sounded cool". Many adolescents on hallucinogens will hear color and see sound. Therefore, hallucinogens alter any sense of reality in a drug user.

What are the effects for the user?

Users report that Ecstasy produces intensely pleasurable effects – including an enhanced sense of self-confidence and energy. Effects include feelings of peacefulness, acceptance and empathy. Users say they experience feelings of closeness with others and a desire to touch others. Other effects can include involuntary teeth clenching, a loss of inhibitions, transfixion on sights and sounds, nausea, blurred vision, chills and/or sweating. Increases in heart rate and blood pressure, as well as seizures, are also possible. The stimulant effects of the drug enable users to dance for extended periods, which when combined with the hot crowded conditions usually found at raves, can lead to severe dehydration and hyperthermia or dramatic increases in body temperature. This can lead to muscle breakdown and kidney, liver and cardiovascular failure. Cardiovascular failure has been reported in some of the Ecstasy-related fatalities.

After-effects can include sleep problems, anxiety and depression.

What are its long-term effects?

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. Serotonin A neurotransmitter that regulates many functions, including mood, appetite, and sensory perception. (National Institute on Drug Abuse)

What is its federal classification?

Schedule I

Source

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA); Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) [Revised July 2003]

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