

Drugs and mental health

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Recreational drugs, by their nature, mess with your mind - that's partly the idea. But sometimes, and for some people, the effects aren't that desirable.

Cocaine

Cocaine is a white flaky powder obtained from the leaves of the coca plant. It is odourless, soluble, and has powerful stimulant properties similar to those of amphetamines.

What can it do to my head?

Anxiety, paranoia, depression, and often the inability to sleep can occur during the come down period, thus encouraging users to repeat the dose in order to maintain the effect. Users can develop a strong psychological dependence to cocaine, often taking more to deal with the comedown.

Ecstasy

Ecstasy is made up of a mixture of drugs, including a synthetic drug called MDMA, and is classed as a hallucinogenic amphetamine.

What can it do to my head?

As the drug kicks in, users may experience an initial rush of nervousness, and uncertainty. Some users have reported a bad experience on ecstasy, including feelings of paranoia and confusion. It is very common to suffer minor depression in the days following the use of ecstasy. There is fierce debate about the long-term psychological effects of ecstasy. Some users have experienced memory problems, severe sleep problems and major depression following regular use.

Speed

Speed (amphetamine) is a stimulant that usually comes in the form of grey, white or dirty-white powder. It's snorted or dissolved in liquid for injection or drinking, or swallowed in pill form.

What can it do to my head?

Some users become tense and anxious while on speed. The comedown can last for a couple of days, leaving users feeling tired, depressed and irritable. In short term, memory and concentration are all affected. Long-term users may become dependent on the buzz speed gives them while heavy abuse over long periods has been linked to mental illnesses such as psychosis.

Cannabis

Cannabis is a natural substance from a plant commonly called hemp. It comes in a solid dark lump known as resin, leaves, stalks, seeds called grass and also as a sticky oil.

What can it do to my head?

Cannabis can affect short-term memory and ability to concentrate. It can also make some users paranoid and anxious, depending on their mood and situation. To find out more about how cannabis affects you check out our section on [cannabis and mental health](#).

LSD

Lysergic acid diethylamide is a hallucinogenic drug that comes in tiny squares of paper, often with a picture on one side.

What can it do to my head?

LSD can have a powerful, often unpredictable effect on the mind. Users may experience their surroundings in a very different way, including the distortion of objects, movement, vision and

hearing. Hallucinations are also common. Some users experience flashbacks of past 'trips' for a long time afterwards.

In the worst cases, dizziness, disorientation, fear, paranoia, and panic may arise. The likelihood of a bad trip will increase when users are in a bad mood, anxious, nervous, uncomfortable or have a history of mental problems.

People who shouldn't take drugs

People with existing psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and schizophrenia risk complications by taking any of the drugs above.

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