MDMA Consumption Has Increased Among Young Adults

By Jaclyn M. Cheek

MDMA, or ecstasy, is a complex psychedelic amphetamine that has gained in popularity over the past 20 years. The use of this drug has increased worldwide, especially among teens and young adults. This popularity is due to the strong feelings of comfort, empathy and connection to others that the pill produces. MDMA is often used at "raves", nightclubs, college campuses, and small group gatherings.

Depending on how much and how recently one has eaten, MDMA usually takes somewhere between 30-60 minutes to take effect. The onset of MDMA is very fast. Many times when a person is beginning to realize that they are starting to feel the effects of MDMA, they are already close to the peak. This quick launch to the peak can be unnerving, feeling like it is too quick, and hard to know when it is going to end. Generally these feelings only last a few minutes until the full effects of the pill are reached. When taken orally, the primary affects of MDMA usually last between 3-4 hours. For many people there is an additional amount of time, usually 2-6 hours, when it is difficult for them to go to sleep and when there is a noticeable difference from everyday reality. Many people also experience a shift in mood for a few days following the use of MDMA. For some this is a period of depression, while others experience a lifted mood.

A standard oral dose of MDMA is between 18-150 mg, with most pills falling somewhere in this range. Individual tablets vary in price depending on where they are purchased and in what quantity. Normally, one pill will range from 20-30 dollars. However, if it is purchased in higher quantities it generally sells for 100-250 dollars per gram. Because of its popularity, the demand for MDMA usually exceeds the supply. Thus, MDMA tablets often contain other drugs unbeknownst to the consumer. They commonly contain MDA, MDE, DXM (all of which are hallucinogens),
caffeine, ephedrine, amphetamines, and possibly DOB (a cough suppressant).

Due to the likelihood that MDMA pills might not be what they seem, testing kits have been made to determine many contents of pills. These kits work by scraping a small quantity of powder of the pill onto a plate. A small drop of the testing liquid is then dripped onto the powder. A chemical reaction will occur between the liquid reagent and some of the more popular chemicals found in MDMA pills. This reaction may cause the liquid to turn into a variety of colors. These different colors show the presence or absence of certain chemicals like MDE, DOB, speed, methamphetamines, and many other chemicals. However, there are chemicals that do not cause a reaction with the testing kit. Just because the pill tests positive for an ecstasy-like substance does not mean that the pill is pure or safe. It may contain a wide variety of safe or dangerous chemicals.

For further information regarding this article please contact the Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development Project, Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Emory West Campus, 1256 Briarcliff Road N.E., Suite 323-West, Atlanta GA, 30306. You can email us at msacd@listserv.cc.emory.edu, visit our website at http://www.emory.edu/MSACD, or phone us at 404-712-9800.

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