



CLUB DRUGS

STATISTICS AND INFORMATION ON EVENT "ENHANCING" DRUGS.

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MDMA (ecstasy), Rohypnol, GHB, and ketamine are among the drugs used by teens and young adults who are part of a nightclub, bar, rave, or trance scene. Raves and trance events are generally night-long dances, often held in warehouses. Many who attend raves and trances do not use drugs, but those who do may be attracted to their generally low cost, and to the intoxicating highs that are said to deepen the rave or trance experience. Current science, however, is showing changes to critical parts of the brain from use of these drugs.

Although national rates for hospital emergency department (ED) mentions of club drugs were low in 2002 (with none exceeding 2 mentions per 100,000 population) and no increases were measured from 2001 to 2002, significant increases in certain club drug mentions were apparent from 1995 to 2002. MDMA ED mentions, for example, increased from 421 in 1995 to 4,026 in 2002; and GHB ED mentions increased from 145 in 1995 to 3,330 in 2002.*

MDMA (Ecstasy)

MDMA (3-4 methylenedioxymethamphetamine) is a synthetic, psychoactive drug chemically similar to the stimulant methamphetamine and the hallucinogen mescaline. Street names for MDMA include "ecstasy," "XTC," and "hug drug." Drug use data sources for 21 metropolitan areas nationwide indicate that MDMA, once used primarily as a club drug, is being used in a number of other social settings.** In high doses, MDMA can interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature. This can lead to a sharp increase in body temperature (hyperthermia), resulting in liver, kidney, and cardiovascular system failure. Because MDMA can interfere with its own metabolism (breakdown within the body), potentially harmful levels can be reached by repeated drug use within short intervals.

Research in humans suggests that chronic MDMA use can lead to changes in brain function, affecting cognitive tasks and memory. MDMA can also lead to symptoms of depression several days after its use. These symptoms may occur because of MDMA's effects on neurons that use the chemical serotonin to communicate with other neurons. The serotonin system plays an important role in regulating mood, aggression, sexual activity, sleep, and sensitivity to pain. In addition, users of MDMA face many of the same risks as users of other stimulants such as cocaine and amphetamines.

Research in animals links MDMA exposure to long-term damage to serotonin neurons. A study in nonhuman primates showed that exposure to MDMA for only 4 days caused damage to serotonin nerve terminals that was evident 6 to 7 years later. While similar neurotoxicity has not been definitively shown in humans, the wealth of animal research indicating MDMA's damaging properties suggests that MDMA is not a safe drug for human consumption.

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