

Hallucinogens

Patient Education Module

Hallucinogens (also known as 'psychedelics') can make a person see, hear, smell, feel or taste things that aren't really there or are different from how they are in reality. Some plants such as magic mushrooms can cause hallucinations. Hallucinogens such as LSD can also be made in a lab.

Types of hallucinogens

LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide)

Also known as acid, trips, tabs, microdots, and dots. In its pure state, LSD is a white odorless powder. However, it usually comes in squares of gelatin or blotting paper that have been dipped or soaked in LSD. LSD is also sometimes sold as a liquid, in a tablet or in capsules. LSD is usually swallowed, but it can also be sniffed, injected or smoked.

Magic mushrooms

Also known as shrooms, mushies, blue meanies, golden tops, and liberty caps. There are many different types of magic mushrooms. The most common ones in Australia are called golden tops, blue meanies and liberty caps. Magic mushrooms look similar to poisonous mushrooms that can cause a person to become very sick and can result in death. Magic mushrooms are usually sold as dried mushrooms, a powder or as capsules. Mushrooms are often eaten fresh, cooked or brewed into a tea. They are sometimes mixed with tobacco or cannabis, and smoked.

Mescaline (peyote cactus)

Also known as cactus, cactus buttons, cactus joint, mesc, and mescal. Mescaline is the active ingredient of the peyote cactus plant. It is also known to be made synthetically in a lab. In its pure form, mescaline sulfate is a white crystal-like powder. Synthetic mescaline can come in different colors. The peyote cactus contains 'buttons' that can be cut from the root of the plant, and then dried before eating or smoking them.

Effects of hallucinogens

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries some risk. The effects of hallucinogens can last for 4 to 12 hours and can be different depending on which type of hallucinogen is used. The following may be experienced during this time:

Feeling happy and relaxed	Clumsiness
Seeing and hearing things that aren't there	Fast or irregular heart beat
Confusion and trouble concentrating	Breathing quickly
Dizziness	Vomiting
Blurred vision	Sweating and chills
Numbness	

Bad trips

Sometimes a 'bad trip' may be experienced, involving a disturbing hallucination. This can lead to panic and risky behavior, like running across a road or attempting suicide. If a large amount or a strong batch is taken the negative effects of hallucinogens are more likely.

Coming down

In the following days after using hallucinogens, the following may be experienced: anxiety, panic attacks, and depression

Long term effects

People who regularly use hallucinogens may eventually experience flashbacks. Flashbacks are hallucinations that occur weeks, months or even years after the drug was last taken. This can be disturbing, especially when the hallucination is frightening. Flashbacks can be brought on by using other drugs, stress, tiredness or exercise and usually last for a minute or two. In addition to flashbacks, regular use of hallucinogens may eventually cause psychological dependence on hallucinogens, as well as, financial, work and social problems.

Using hallucinogens with other drugs

The effects of taking hallucinogens with other drugs, including prescribed medications, can be unpredictable and dangerous, and could cause:

Hallucinogens + ice, speed or ecstasy = enormous strain on the heart and body, which can lead to stroke.

Hallucinogens + alcohol, cannabis or benzodiazepines = increased clumsiness and chance of vomiting.

Withdrawal

Psychological withdrawal symptoms are more common than physical symptoms, but as hallucinogens are a range of different drugs, it's not possible to be specific about withdrawal symptoms. People withdrawing from hallucinogens may experience: cravings, fatigue, irritability, and reduced ability to experience pleasure