

# Ecstasy

Nothing to Rave About!

**A Drug Prevention Resource for Today's Youth**

## What Is Ecstasy?

The National Institute on Drug Abuse defines Ecstasy, or MDMA as a synthetic, psychoactive drug with both stimulant (amphetamine-like) and hallucinogenic (LSD-like) properties. Street names for MDMA include Ecstasy, Adam, XTC, hug, beans, and love drug.

Its chemical structure (3-4 methylenedioxyamphetamine, or “MDMA”) is similar to methamphetamine, methylenedioxyamphetamine (MDA), and mescaline – other synthetic drugs known to cause brain damage.

MDMA also is neurotoxic. In addition, in high doses it can cause a sharp increase in body temperature (malignant hyperthermia) leading to muscle breakdown and kidney and cardiovascular system failure.

Doctors say the “highs” experienced from Ecstasy are because the brain produces high levels of the chemical serotonin. That “rush” is associated with feelings of empathy and contentment. According to the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, the Merck Company first manufactured Ecstasy in Germany in 1914. Some therapists used the drug to encourage patients to be more “open and connected” until it was banned in 1985, when lab tests in animals showed the chemicals were neurotoxic.

Ecstasy is usually sold in pill form. The pills range in price from \$7-\$30. Many of the pills have logos. Brand names are used to market them. Although a pill has a certain logo, police say there is no way to tell what is in them, and even if two pills have the same logo, they may contain different substances. The following page shows examples of pills marketed as Ecstasy.

Brand names and logos are used as marketing tools to identify a pill as ecstasy, and to distinguish one ecstasy pill from another. Any tablet with a logo can be sold as ecstasy, though the content may not be MDMA. The photograph below shows just a few of the many pills that have been marketed as ecstasy.

## Sample Ecstasy Tablets



Center for Substance Abuse Research (CESAR)  
4321 Hartwick Road, Suite 501,  
College Park, MD 20740  
Tel: 301-403-8329, Fax: 301-403-8342,  
e-mail: [cesar@cesar.umd.edu](mailto:cesar@cesar.umd.edu)

## What are the Effects of Ecstasy?

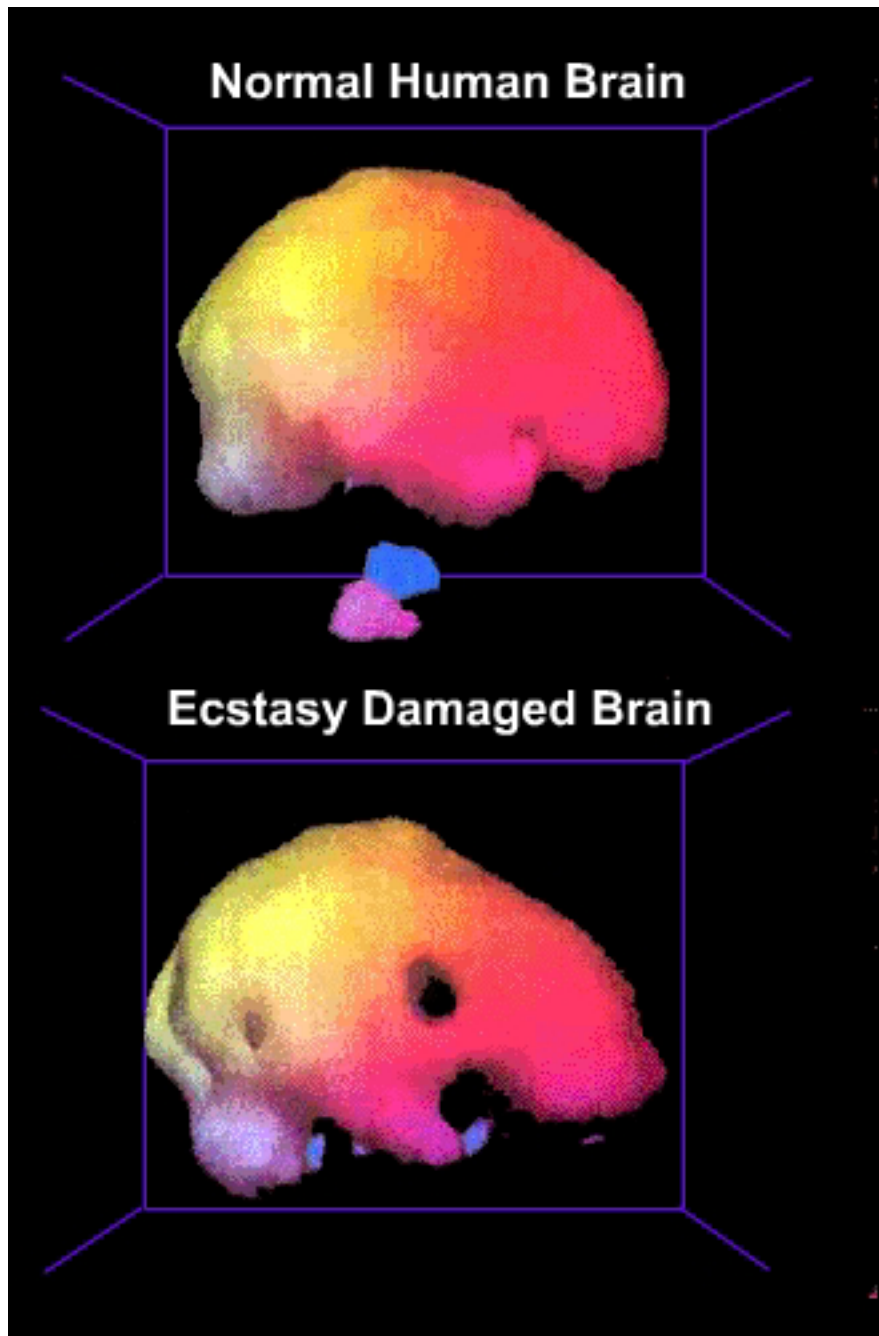
According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, brain-imaging research in humans indicates that MDMA causes injury to the brain, affecting neurons that use the chemical serotonin to communicate with other neurons. The serotonin system plays a direct role in regulating mood, aggression, sexual activity, sleep, and sensitivity to pain. Many of the risks users face with MDMA use are similar to the risks of cocaine and amphetamine use:

- \* Psychological difficulties, including confusion, depression, sleep problems, drug craving, severe anxiety, and paranoia – during and sometimes weeks after taking MDMA.
  - \* Physical symptoms such as muscle tension, involuntary teeth clenching, nausea, blurred vision, rapid eye movement, faintness, and chills or sweating.
  - \* Increases in heart rate and blood pressure, a special risk for people with circulatory or heart disease.
- Also, there is evidence that people who develop a rash that looks like acne after using MDMA may be risking severe side effects, including liver damage, if they continue to use the drug.

Research links MDMA use to long-term damage to those parts of the brain critical to thought and memory. One study, in primates, showed that exposure to MDMA for four days caused brain damage that was evident six to seven years later.

MDMA also is related in its structure and effects to methamphetamine, which has been shown to cause degeneration of neurons containing the neurotransmitter dopamine. Damage to these neurons is the underlying cause of the motor disturbances seen in Parkinson's disease.

## Brain Scan Comparisons



The above photo shows the images of two human brains. The brain images on top belong to an individual who has never used MDMA. The bottom images show the brain of an individual who had used MDMA heavily for an extended period, but did not take drugs for at least three weeks prior to the study.

## WHAT DOES A FELONY DRUG CONVICTION MEAN?

A felony drug conviction can mean a lifetime of struggling. Even if a person gets caught using Ecstasy and ends up avoiding jail time, they may still end up with a felony.

Police say getting caught with even one pill of Ecstasy can mean a felony drug conviction. Police say juveniles who get caught dealing are often prosecuted as adults. We did some research on how that conviction would affect a person's future. We contacted several corporations and a university to see what the policies are pertaining to a conviction.

Here's what we found.

Florida State University: The school has a policy that if they receive an application for admission and the person has a felony drug conviction, they send that application to a local police department. That law enforcement agency must determine that the person is "not a threat to the student body" in order for the person to be admitted. The process obviously greatly inhibits the chances of being admitted.

Walgreen's Corporation: Michael Polzin, Corporate Spokesperson says, "Walgreen's will not hire anyone with a felony drug conviction."

The Florida Bar Association: Executive Director Katherine Russell says, "Someone with a felony drug conviction shall not be eligible to apply to the bar until their civil rights are restored...this is a Florida Supreme Court rule."

Suntrust Bank: Spokesperson Diane Hollingsworth says people with a felony drug conviction are considered on a "case by case basis, and applicants must undergo drug screening."

Salomon Smith Barney, West Palm Beach office: Kathy Schellbrick says applicants are reviewed on a "case by case basis, but Salomon Smith Barney will probably not hire someone with a felony drug conviction."

## Where Can People Go For Help?

- The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information  
(800) 662-4357 Treatment Referrals  
(800) 729-6686 Treatment and Prevention
- Narcotics Anonymous  
Check Your local Listings
- Families Anonymous Inc.  
(800) 736-9805  
(310) 313-5800  
<http://www.familiesanonymous.org/>
- Nar-Anon Family Group Headquarters  
(310) 547-5800
- Toughlove International  
(800) 333-1069  
<http://www.toughlove.org/>
- Hazelden Foundation  
(800) 257-7800  
[www.hazelden.com](http://www.hazelden.com)
- Join Together  
(617) 437-1500  
[www.jointogether.org](http://www.jointogether.org)
- National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc.  
(212) 206-6770  
(800) NCA-CALL  
[www.ncadd.org](http://www.ncadd.org)
- National Crime Prevention Council  
(800) 627-2911  
[www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org)
- National PTA Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Project  
(800) 307-4782  
(312) 670-6782  
[www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

- National Institute on Drug Abuse  
(301) 443-1124  
[www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov)

- Parents and Adolescents Recovering Together Successfully  
(619) 698-3449

- Parent to Parent  
(800) 487-7743

- Partnership for a Drug-Free America  
(212) 922-1560  
[www.drugfreeamerica.org](http://www.drugfreeamerica.org)

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)/  
National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)  
(800) SAY-NOTO  
[www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)/  
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)  
(301) 443-0365

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)/  
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)  
(800) 662-HELP  
[www.drughelp.org](http://www.drughelp.org)



## **Suggested Survey Questions for Students**

- Have your parents talked to you about drugs, Ecstasy in particular?
- Do you know anyone at your school that has done Ecstasy?
- Do you think a lot of kids at your school do Ecstasy?
- Do you believe Ecstasy is dangerous?
- What would you tell a friend if they asked what you thought about Ecstasy?

# Ecstasy

## Nothing to Rave About!

**A Drug Prevention Resource for Today's Youth**



For more information about ordering the accompanying educational video with discussion guide, contact:

Donna Davis,  
Florida's News Channel  
850 222-6397 ext. 262.  
donnad31@yahoo.com