

ECSTASY (MDMA) AWARENESS

Ecstasy (MDMA) is an amphetamine-based drug with hallucinogenic properties. Other names include X, E, XTC, Adam, the love drug, and hug drug. In its purest form, Ecstasy is a powder. However, it is most often found pressed into tablets, which vary widely in color and size. Most Ecstasy tablets are the size of an aspirin tablet. These different brands of Ecstasy are sold under different names (i.e. 007, butterfly, 7 of Diamonds, Camel, Cloud 9, Crown, Green Heart, Pink Heart, JB, Medusa, Mitsubishi, MTV, Rolex, Star, and Star 2). Average cost per "dose" or "hit" ranges from \$10 to \$30 dollars each.

Young adults and adolescents at clubs, raves (large, all-night dance parties), and concerts, most often use Ecstasy. Recently, in the civilian sector, there has been an alarming increase in the popularity of some very dangerous substances collectively known as "club drugs." The term "club drugs" refers to drugs being used by young adults at all-night parties, otherwise known as "raves" or "trances", dance clubs, and bars. Ecstasy is one of those drugs gaining widespread popularity. During the past two (2) years, Navy has also experienced an increase in samples testing positive for Ecstasy.

RAVES

RAVES are usually non-alcoholic dances or parties that last all night with a target population 16 to 21 year olds. Dancing for hours to trance-inducing music in an atmosphere much different from the typical nightclub. It is at these all-night parties where Ecstasy and other designer drugs such as ketamine (Special K) and GHB most frequently show up. The new club-drug scene has a number of characteristics that make it a risk-laden situation. First, many of those involved are young and have little knowledge of the drugs Ecstasy, GHB, or ketamine. Second, the dominant drug used on this scene, MDMA or Ecstasy is marketed as a "safe" drug used by everyone.

A misconception among Sailors abusing Ecstasy (MDMA) is that Navy Drug Screening Labs (NDSLs) do not test for MDMA.

FACT: NDSLs test every urine sample for Ecstasy (MDMA).

ECSTASY HISTORY AND CONCERNS

Ecstasy abuse goes back to the early 1900s; it has an extremely high potential for abuse and has no accepted medical use in the United States. As early as the mid-1980s society witnessed the emergence and popularization of the drug Ecstasy. Recently, the civilian sector has experienced an alarming increase in the abuse of Ecstasy by adolescents and young adults.

In 1995, Navy began to see a small number of Sailors testing positive for Ecstasy. In FY-99, Navy experienced a two-fold increase in individuals testing positive for Ecstasy compared to FY-98. Although Ecstasy abuse in the Navy is relatively low at this time, there is growing concern about Ecstasy's increased popularity in the civilian community carrying over into Navy.

WHO ABUSES ECSTASY AND WHY?

Ecstasy is an amphetamine-based drug with psychedelic properties that has gained popularity over the past decade among adolescents and young adults who frequent raves (large, all-night dance parties), all night clubs, and concerts. Besides price and availability, the other reasons people use Ecstasy are:

- ◆ myth of Sailors that Navy Drug Screening Labs (NDSLs) do not test for Ecstasy (MDMA);

- ◆ quick onset of effects and initial “rush” of energy usually described as mild but euphoric;
- ◆ perception of increased empathy and self-insight;
- ◆ alleged fewer side effects and unpleasant emotional reactions than other drugs (i.e. cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine);
- ◆ reported euphoric and sensual effects associated with Ecstasy;
- ◆ ease of ingestion without stigma of smoking, snorting, or injecting; and
- ◆ A sense on belonging to a special group, especially at “raves”.

HOW IS ECSTASY USED?

Ecstasy (MDMA) is most often available in tablet form and is usually ingested orally.

In its purest form Ecstasy (MDMA) is a crystalline powder and is sometimes snorted, occasionally smoked, and rarely injected.

Adolescents and young adults rationalize that by taking a tablet they avoid the stigma of drug abuse normally associated with snorting, smoking, and injecting a drug.

ECSTASY SIDE EFFECTS

While the following could be warning signs of many other abused substances, here are some signs of possible Ecstasy abuse:

- jaw clenching and teeth grinding;
- increased heart rate, blood pressure and body temperature;
- eye wiggles, tightened muscles, nervousness;

- sweating, chills, and nausea;
- next-day sleepiness;
- loss of appetite.

Ecstasy can cause toxic reactions in people with asthma, heart conditions, diabetes, epilepsy, psychosis, or depression.