

Hallucinogens

Hallucinogens include both synthetic (made in a laboratory) and plant based substances. Synthetic hallucinogens include lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) ketamine, and phencyclidine (PCP) while psilocybin and psilocin come from fungi and mescaline comes from the peyote cactus. Ketamine is an anaesthetic used legally in both medical and veterinary practice.

Hallucinogens are a group of drugs that affect the user's perceptions of reality by distorting the senses (vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch). This can result in hallucinations where people perceive things that are not there or perceive things differently from reality. Hallucinogens can also result in distortion of cognitive processes, the sense of time, self-awareness and mood.

Other Names

Street names include trips, tabs, acid (LSD) magic mushrooms, mushies, blue meanies, golden tops, (fungi), K, Special K, Super K, Vitamin K (Ketamine), Angel Dust (PCP), cactus, cactus buttons, cactus joint, mesc, mescal (mescaline).

Short Term Effects

The effects of hallucinogens are unpredictable, depending on the type and dose taken and on the individual. Effects may vary significantly from user to user and in the same user on different occasions.

Short term effects can include:

- Hallucinations and perceptual distortions
- Mood swings, anxiety, panic, paranoia, euphoria
- Numbness, muscle weakness and twitching, tremor, impaired coordination
- Dilated pupils
- Seizures
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Changes in temperature, sweating
- Rapid deep breathing
- Nausea and vomiting.

Sometimes users may experience a 'bad trip' with very frightening hallucinations and panic.

Coming down

Some users may experience anxiety, panic or depression in the days following hallucinogen use.

Long term effects

Flashbacks may occur and there may be exacerbation of mental illness such as schizophrenia.

After a few days of use tolerance develops, however sensitivity to hallucinogens is usually restored after several days of abstinence. Physical dependence on hallucinogens is very rare.

Mixing hallucinogens with other drugs

The effects of mixing hallucinogens with other drugs are unpredictable, however, using other substances with hallucinogens can increase the risk of unpleasant drug effects and overdose.

Using hallucinogens with stimulant drugs can put increased strain on the heart and body and increase the risk of stroke.

Legal Issues

It is illegal to possess, use, supply, manufacture or sell hallucinogens in Australia or to help someone else to do these things. Supply includes giving hallucinogens to a friend. Penalties can differ in different states and territories but include heavy fines and imprisonment.

It is also illegal to drive while under the influence of hallucinogens. Penalties may include heavy fines, imprisonment and loss of your driving license

Adapted from Drug Facts (Hallucinogens), Alcohol and Drug Foundation, 2019.