

Substances At A Glance: MDMA / Ecstasy

MDMA is one of the most frequently identified controlled substance in illegal drugs seized by Canadian law enforcement agencies.¹



What is MDMA? Methylenedioxymethamphetamine or MDMA, also called “Ecstasy,” “Molly,” “XTC” or “Adam” on the street, is a synthetic, drug that acts both as a stimulant and hallucinogen. Ecstasy is usually sold as a tablet or capsule that can be swallowed or crushed, or sold as a powder to be snorted. There are also rare reports of the drug being injected.



MDMA use among youth: In 2024, 2% of youth in grades 7-12 reported using MDMA in the past 12 months.² Meanwhile, 3% of post-secondary age youth reported past year use of MDMA or similar designer drugs in 2022.³



Why do young people use MDMA? People may choose to use MDMA to feel excitement or pleasure; it first became popular recreationally in the 1980's by youth at all-night parties and clubs. MDMA is also currently being reviewed for possible medical uses, specifically for its potential use in psychotherapy to treat conditions such as anxiety or PTSD. *These trials have yet to provide conclusive results and there are currently no approved therapeutic uses of MDMA in Canada.*



MDMA and the law: MDMA is illegal in Canada, as it is a substance that falls under Schedule I of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Its sale, possession or production is illegal. Possession can result in seven years imprisonment, while trafficking and production of the drug can result in life imprisonment. In 2023, there were exemptions for MDMA production and possession for academic and therapeutic research.



What is “fake MDMA?” Some producers or dealers may sell drug mixtures that are marketed as MDMA, but are entirely different drugs. Mixtures can include cocaine, methamphetamine, fentanyl, ketamine, caffeine, LSD, over the counter medicines or other drugs. Mixing drugs together in this manner can result in significant health risks, including loss of consciousness, psychotic episodes, heart attack, lung failure or death.^{4,5}



Substances At A Glance: MDMA / Ecstasy

There are currently no approved therapeutic products containing MDMA that are legal in Canada.⁵



Short and long-term effects: MDMA can produce feelings of alertness, making someone feel energetic and talkative. People who use MDMA report feeling more confident and friendlier toward others. As these effects wear off, a person may experience fatigue, anxiety/depression, paranoia or hallucinations. Physical effects of MDMA use can also include sweating, nausea/vomiting, seizures, jaw pain and blurry vision.⁶



What are the risks of MDMA use? MDMA can cause increased blood pressure, vomiting, as well as kidney, liver or brain damage. People living with diabetes should not use MDMA, as it may cause ketoacidosis, a life-threatening condition. MDMA use has been linked with impaired judgment and increased sexual activity, which can lead to unsafe sex and increased risk of spreading sexually transmitted illnesses.⁵



How can someone reduce the risks of MDMA use? Since MDMA can make a person feel more trusting, as well as cause frightening hallucinations, it should only be used around trusted people. Those with a history of psychological disorders (psychosis, schizophrenia) should avoid using MDMA. If you or someone you know is experiencing any unwanted effects after use, call emergency medical services.



How can I help my kids understand the risks of MDMA? Having open and meaningful conversations about the use of MDMA and other substances on a regular basis with your child is crucial to keeping them healthy and safe. Discuss with them the short- and long-term effects, the risks, and the importance of making safe decisions. Most importantly, always offer empathy and support to ensure that they feel safe, even if you learn or suspect that your child is using.



Mixing MDMA with other substances: Mixing MDMA is a common practice among those who use, choosing to mix with Ketamine, amphetamines, cocaine or other psychedelic drugs. This can increase the risk of overdose of either or all substances, resulting in hospitalization. Mixing MDMA with other medications such as HIV medications or anti-depressants may result in Serotonin Syndrome, causing diarrhea, shivering, rigidity, fever, seizures and possibly death.

Reference List

1. Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, 2022. [Methylenedioxy-
Methamphetamine \(MDMA, Ecstasy or Molly\)](#).
2. Government of Canada, 2025. [Canadian Student Alcohol And Drugs Survey 2023-2024](#).
3. Government of Canada, 2024. [Canadian Post-Secondary Education Alcohol & Drug Use
Survey 2021-2022](#).
4. American Addiction Centers, 2024. [Adulterants & Additives in Substances](#).
5. Center for Addiction and Mental Health, 2010. [Ecstasy](#).
6. Government of Canada, 2023. [Ecstasy](#).