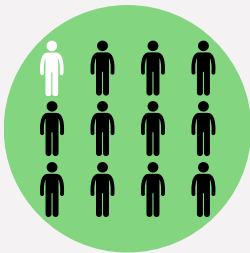


# Substances At A Glance: Psilocybin Mushrooms

Hallucinogens like psilocybin, MDMA and LSD are the most commonly use illicit drugs by teens and young adults in Canada.<sup>1,2</sup>



**What is Psilocybin?** Psilocybin is a hallucinogen found in certain types of mushrooms, often known as “magic mushrooms.” Their use has been traced back by humans thousands of years. They may be sold as dried mushrooms or as a brown powder. Mushrooms are eaten raw or cooked, steeped in hot water to make a mushroom “tea” or, less often, they may be sniffed or snorted. The active component is sometimes made in illegal labs and sold on the street as a white powder, tablets or capsules.



**Psilocybin use among youth:** In 2024, 5.3% of youth in grades 7-12 reported using hallucinogens like magic mushrooms in the past 12 months.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, 8.4% of post-secondary age youth reported past year use of hallucinogens in 2022.<sup>2</sup>



**Why do young people use Psilocybin?** People may use magic mushrooms to help boost their mood, as they may cause a person to feel more upbeat and creative. Others may use psilocybin in religious or spiritual practices. Some use psilocybin recreationally as a party drug, while others may self-medicate with it in response to a mental health disorder or to cope with emotional stress or trauma.<sup>3</sup>



**Psilocybin and the law:** Possession, sale and production of psilocybin is illegal in Canada unless authorized through Health Canada with a license or exemption. Psilocybin is currently under review for its potential to help treat health conditions such as anxiety, depression, OCD and substance use disorders. While these reviews are ongoing, psilocybin remains illegal in Canada with penalties up to ten years in prison.<sup>4</sup>



**What is a 'bad trip?'** Sometimes, a person taking hallucinogens like LSD, MDMA or psilocybin may begin to experience negative effects that can become emotionally or psychologically overwhelming, referred to as a 'bad trip.' These effects can include extreme paranoia and mood swings, negative or terrifying hallucinations or negative interpretations of reality. These can cause anxiety or panic attacks, psychotic episodes, or cause a person to do extreme, dangerous and unpredictable things.<sup>5</sup>



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*There are also over 200 types of magic mushrooms; it is possible for some to be mistaken for poisonous mushrooms, causing people who eat them to require hospitalization.*



**Short and long-term effects:** Magic mushrooms can cause feelings of pleasure and euphoria, as well as hallucinations and distorted senses. They can also cause light-headedness, anxiety, paranoia, numbness of the face, increased heart rate and blood pressure, wide fluctuations in body temperature and loss of bladder control.<sup>4</sup>



**What are the risks of psilocybin use?** New or heavy users may experience bad trips. These effects may also be risky for those with pre-existing conditions such as schizophrenia or psychosis. Mixing psilocybin with other drugs can increase the risk of overdose. Psilocybin can increase blood pressure and heart rate, which can be harmful for those with heart conditions.<sup>4</sup>



**How can someone reduce the risks of psilocybin use?** Those with a history of pre-existing heart or psychological conditions should limit or avoid use of magic mushrooms. Avoid mixing with alcohol or other drugs. Use in a safe space around people you trust, designate a sober driver if you are travelling and contact emergency medical services if someone you know is acting unsafe or experiencing symptoms of a bad trip. Magic mushrooms should never be injected, as doing so can cause septic shock and multiple organ failure.



**How can I help my kids understand the risks of psilocybin?** Research about psilocybin is evolving, and parents should remain educated on the topic. If a youth is curious about how magic mushrooms may affect their mental health, encourage them to speak with their doctor or healthcare provider to consider alternative methods of supporting their overall health.



**Is psilocybin addictive?** There is no evidence that addiction, physical or psychological dependence develops with continued use of psilocybin. However, people can become tolerant to the effects of psilocybin with regular use. Complete tolerance, where no amount of psilocybin can produce the desired effects, can develop within several days. A person using psilocybin must stop using for days to regain sensitivity.

## Reference List

1. Government of Canada, 2025. [Canadian Student Alcohol And Drugs Survey 2023-2024](#).
2. Government of Canada, 2024. [Canadian Post-Secondary Education Alcohol & Drug Use Survey 2021-2022](#).
3. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2009. [Hallucinogens](#).
4. Government of Canada, 2023. [Psilocybin and psilocin \(Magic mushrooms\)](#).
5. The Recovery Village, 2022. [What is a Bad Trip?](#)