HALLUCINOGENS

Hallucinogens, or psychedelics, are drugs that affect a person's perceptions, sensations, thinking, self-awareness, and emotions. Hallucinogens include such drugs as LSD, MDMA (ecstasy), mescaline, and psilocybin. Some hallucinogens come from natural sources. Mescaline, for example, comes from the peyote cactus. Others, such as LSD, are synthetic or manufactured.

EDITOR'S NOTE
In the 1960's the abuse of hallucinogens by the drug culture became evident. Recent survey information indicates an increase in the use of LSD and mushrooms among KSU students. As a result, we thought it would be a good idea to put together some current information on a variety of hallucinogens.

Hallucinogenic Effects

The effects of hallucinogens are unpredictable. It depends on many things including the amount taken, the user's mood, personality and expectations, and the surroundings in which the drug is taken. Usually, the user feels the first effects of the drug 30-90 minutes after taking it. Some physical effects include dilated pupils, higher body temperature, increased heart rate and blood pressure, sweating, hyperactivity, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, dry mouth and tremors. Some delusional activity may occur. The user is usually able to give a history of their drug ingestion.

Sensations and feelings change too. The user may feel several different emotions at once or swinging rapidly from one emotion to another. The person's sense of time and self change, control over input is significantly diminished, and they may become very suggestible. Sensations may seem to "cross over," giving the user the feeling of "hearing" colors and "seeing" sounds. All of these changes can be frightening and can cause panic.

Heavy users, particularly of LSD, sometimes develop signs of organic brain damage, such as impaired memory and attention span, mental confusion, and difficulty with abstract thinking.
WHAT ARE "BAD TRIPS"

Having a bad psychological reaction to a hallucinogen is common. The scary sensations may last a few minutes or several hours and be mildly frightening or terrifying. The user may experience panic, confusion, suspiciousness, anxiety, feelings of helplessness, and loss of control. Sometimes taking a hallucinogen can unmask mental or emotional problems that were previously unknown to the user. Flashbacks, in which the person experiences a drug's effect without having to take the drug again, can occur.

The best thing to do for a person who is experiencing a "bad trip" is to provide supportive care and reassurance in a quiet, private, and moderately lighted room. If the person does not respond to this intervention, they should be taken to an emergency room immediately.

The use of antipsychotic drugs are rarely prescribed by the medical community for a psychedelic drug intoxication, unless psychosis persists.*

*This information, or any contained herein, should not be used in lieu of professional medical advice/assistance.

MUSHROOMS

Psilocybin mushrooms, frequently called "shrooms" or Magic Mushrooms contain psilocybin, which is a mild hallucinogenic substance. Most mushrooms containing psilocybin are bitter, but they are treasured by the drug culture because they provide the most vivid colors during hallucinosis. The effects of mushrooms generally last for 5 to 6 hours, and both wild and cultivated mushrooms vary greatly in strength. Although some users of mushrooms prefer the natural high over the synthetic high (e.g. LSD), the drugs have many similar physical and psychological effects. Some of the physical effects of mushrooms may include nausea, vomiting, increased blood pressure, muscular weakness, and increased body temperature; some mental effects include visions perceived with the eyes closed and altered states of consciousness.

Where are mushrooms found???

Psilocybin mushrooms are extremely scarce and found mostly in moist climates, such as parts of Mexico or in Northwestern states like Washington, or in a southern climate such as that of Georgia. The psilocybin mushrooms appear to grow overnight on cow dung containing rye berries, which are found in some cow feed, after a rainfall. Hallucinogenic mushrooms are spotted easily because of their cinnamon-colored cap which gets darker towards the edges. There is also a purple ring about two-thirds of the way up the stem. In addition, the stem and cap will bruise when pinched. If someone is caught with the natural fungi, they can face felony charges.

Most psilocybin mushrooms sold in the U.S. are dried and old. Some users tramp the countryside looking for "shrooms". Unfortunately, the major danger in mushroom harvesting is mistaking poisonous ones for those containing psilocybin. Some of these (i.e. Amanita Phalloides) can cause death or permanent liver damage within hours of ingestion.
**Mescaline**
Mescaline is another drug that produces a psychedelic state. Mescaline is the active ingredient in peyote buttons. Peyote buttons grow on the top of peyote cactus in the deserts of southwestern U.S. and are odorless and bitter. Use of peyote is a part of some American Indian religious ceremonies. Usually 4 to 12 peyote buttons are consumed during each ceremony, and the effects are similar to those of LSD. Street Mescaline (concentrated peyote) is usually smoked, or swallowed in the form of capsules or tablets.

**"Ecstasy"**
MDMA ("Ecstasy") is a "designer" psychedelic drug which is chemically composed of 4-methylenedioxymphetamine. The reason a drug is called a "designer drug" is because its chemical compound has been minutely altered so that it is not considered an illegal substance. Since the appearance of designer drugs, the FDA has closed the legal loop holes regarding their manufacture. MDMA was first discovered in 1914 and began appearing on the streets in the 1970's. The street form of MDMA is highly dangerous, and is analogous to the methamphetamine series. Reactions to the drug may include increased heart rate, tremor, tight jaw, grinding of teeth, muscle tension, back pain, numbness in extremities, and increased color acuity.

**Marijuana**
Adverse reaction to marijuana is uncommon despite widespread use of the drug. Usual signs and symptoms of intoxication include euphoria, increased pulse rate, changes in perception of time and space, bloodshot eyes, hunger, and dry mucous membranes. Panic attacks and paranoid reactions have been associated with marijuana use. The use of today's even more potent marijuana can cause hallucinosis. Although the full syndrome of marijuana intoxication resembles that of the psychedelics, it is often classified separately.

**Other Information**
The general public has little knowledge about the vast array of other lesser-known natural (morning glory seeds) and manufactured (DMT) psychoactive substances and their effects. In fact, we at the KSU Alcohol and Other Drug Education Service rarely answer questions about these types of hallucinogens...but we do have some information available on many of them. So, please call our office if you have questions or concerns, because many of these "natural highs" can also be deadly.
General Information

Phencyclidine (PCP) is a commonly abused hallucinogen and often called "angel dust". Originally called the "peace pill", a term later shortened to PCP, it was developed in the 1950's as a surgical anesthetic that could be used without suppressing the patient's vital functions. After recovering patients reported bizarre reactions, phencyclidine was reassigned for veterinary use only (today it is not generally used by veterinarians). The half-life of 1 to 5 mg of PCP is generally 30 to 60 minutes. This is the dose usually employed in street preparations to produce hallucinosis. Available in many forms, PCP can be a pure, white crystal-like powder, or a tablet or capsule, and it is highly fat soluble. It can be swallowed, smoked, sniffed, or injected. PCP is sometimes sprinkled on Marijuana or parsley and smoked. It is relatively simple to produce, requiring the mixture and heating of approximately 30 chemicals; it is often sold as mescaline, THC, or other drugs. PCP is unique in its effects and in some ways appears to defy classification. It can be a hallucinogen, sedative, hypnotic, and stimulant, depending on the dose.

Effects of PCP

The effects of PCP include increased heart rate and blood pressure, flushing, sweating, dizziness, and numbness. The signs of PCP overdose include drowsiness, convulsions, marked sensory loss, possible respiratory arrest, and coma. The pupils are generally small and are often fixed, and hypertension may also develop. Frequently, a patient in a PCP coma exhibits rapid, unpredictable changes in the level of consciousness, repeated convulsions, heart and lung failure, or ruptured blood vessels in the brain. Phencyclidine has been reported to be associated with prolonged psychosis even after toxicologic tests show complete removal of the drug.

Dangerous Behaviors

Reports of enormous strength in users are a by-product of PCP's anesthetic properties. In addition, due to impaired judgement, user's may attempt dangerous behaviors, such as trying to stop vehicles with their bodies, flying out of a window, or otherwise misjudge their physical ability. The most common cause of death related to PCP is drowning.

Word on the Street

PCP has gained a "bad" street reputation due to its unpredictable side effects. Use has also decreased because Piperidine, a compound from which PCP is synthesized, is now controlled by the government.

The major source of information for this newsletter has been publications provided by the Kansas Department of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services
General Information

LSD or "acid" is manufactured from lysergic acid diethylamide which is found on ergot, a fungus that grows on rye and other grains. LSD is one of the most potent mood-changing chemicals and was discovered in 1938 by Albert Hoffman, a Swiss chemist. It became popular in the 1960's when Timothy Leary, a psychology professor at Harvard University, began extolling its virtues. In its pure form it is odorless, colorless, and tasteless. It dissolves into water and cannot be detected except by chemical testing. LSD is sold on the street in tablets, capsules, or in liquid form (LSD crystals are mixed with alcohol to make a liquid). It is usually taken by mouth but sometimes is injected. The user usually buys "blotter acid," small squares of blotter-like paper divided into small decorated squares, with each square representing one dose. These decorated squares often have pictures of cartoon characters (Beavis and Butthead), zodiac signs, wizards, flowers, a variety of animals, or Jerry Garcia, and are chewed, placed under the tongue, or swallowed. LSD is usually called "Microdot" when it is sold in tablet form, and "Windowpane" when it is in thin squares of gelatin. A single dose cost about two to five dollars.

"Trippin'"

The LSD "trip" or high is uncontrollable and can last from a few minutes to several hours. Responses to LSD cannot be predicted which makes it an extremely dangerous drug. Like most street drugs, buyers have no way of knowing how strong the LSD is they are getting. LSD almost always does not come in a "tattoo", it is a persistent myth that a piece of paper can be stuck on your skin and make you high.

LSD "Flashbacks"

Having a bad psychological reaction to LSD is common, and flashbacks can occur. Research has shown some changes in the mental functions of heavy users of LSD, but they are not present in all cases. Heavy users sometimes develop signs of organic brain damage, such as impaired memory and attention span, mental confusion, and difficulty with abstract thinking. These signs may be strong or they may be subtle.

Important Information

The major predictor of LSD use is marijuana use, and from 1985 to 1990 LSD emergency room cases have increased 65%. Today, the potency of the typical dose of LSD ranges from 20 to 80 micrograms (a microgram is one-millionth of a gram), as opposed to the 150-300 micrograms in the 1960's. Since the 1960's there has been a decrease in the number of "bad trips" associated with LSD use because of the lower dosage. As LSD becomes more popular, and tolerance to its use increases, the dosage percentage will go up. Therefore, stronger and multiple doses ("double dipped" or "triple dipped") will be necessary to get the desired effect, and we will once again be faced with bad trips and flashbacks.

Examples of LSD Blotter Paper.
Do you think he could remember all those addresses if he drank and drove?