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Community Care Team News May/June 2005

In This Issue

Summertime unfortunately is the time when many young people experiment with drugs for the first time. This issue is dedicated to providing information about one of the newest drug trends: Ecstasy and other “club drugs”.

Nearly half of all parents in America are unaware of Ecstasy and other “club drugs” that have become extremely popular with teens and young adults. Particularly disturbing is the fact that these drugs are easily disguised, can be slipped unknowingly into a beverage and are being used at an alarming rate in rural as well as suburban areas. How much do you know? Read on...

What is Ecstasy?

Ecstasy is a dangerous, illegal drug. Chemically, Ecstasy is known as MDMA, short for 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine. While usually taken orally in pill or capsule form, it can also be snorted, smoked or injected.

Ecstasy induces a “high” feeling, accompanied by strong feelings of well being and mild hallucinations. Users may feel relaxed and empathetic. But Ecstasy can also cause anxiety and altered perceptions of what is happening around them.

Ecstasy pills are usually about the size of an aspirin, and according to the Drug Enforcement Administration, they have been manufactured with more than 150 different dye stamps to appeal to a teen audience. These stamps often carry familiar corporate logos or recognizable cartoon figures.

The average dose of Ecstasy is 100 mg; at this level, the liver begins to turn off and damage occurs to the brain. *There is no way for the user to know what ingredients are in a pill, or how much of which ingredients have been used to produce it.*

Street names for Ecstasy include “X”, “E”, “XTC”, “Roll”, “Adam”, “Bean”, the “Hug Drug”, “Love Drug”, “Love Speed” and “Clarity”.

What are the Risks of Ecstasy Use?

It is estimated that 1 in 10 teens and young adults have tried Ecstasy. Ecstasy can cause dramatic increases in body temperature and can lead to muscle breakdown. It can also lead to kidney, liver and cardiovascular failure, which has been reported in some Ecstasy-related deaths.

But perhaps the biggest concern about Ecstasy is its *long-term effect on the brain*. Initially, Ecstasy users get a euphoric feeling due to the release of a chemical in the brain called serotonin. Serotonin plays an important role in

learning and memory, and over time, continued use of Ecstasy can damage the nerve cells that produce serotonin. This results in permanent damage, especially to those parts of the brain critical to thought and memory. Other long term effects include chronic depression, sleep problems, anxiety and paranoia.

Hundreds have died overdosing on Ecstasy and other club drugs.

What are the Warning Signs?

One of the hardest things for parents is that there are no clear indicators of Ecstasy use. However, there are some general warning signs.

- **Behavioral Symptoms:** Changes in peer group; changes in sleeping pattern; declining grades; loss of interest in hobbies or favorite activities; lack of motivation; hostile, uncooperative attitude; and unexplained disappearance of household money.
- **Psychological Symptoms:** Depression; panic attacks; severe anxiety and/or paranoia; and loss of inhibition and unusual displays of affection/sexual activity (while “high”).
- **Physical Symptoms** (while “high”): Blurred vision; rapid eye movement; involuntary jaw clenching and teeth grinding; muscle tension; impaired speech; headaches/dizziness; increased heart rate; high blood pressure; a trance-like state; an intense focus on sights and sounds; chills or sweating; constant movement; dehydration; and vomiting or nausea.

What Else Should I be Looking For?

In addition to behavioral, psychological and physical symptoms, parents can look for paraphernalia associated with Ecstasy use or the “rave” scene, where Ecstasy is prevalent.

Things that look innocent or fad-like, can be linked to Ecstasy use, including:

- Pacifiers
- Lollipops/Blow Pops
- Candy necklaces/Smarties candy
- Glow sticks/or glowing jewelry
- A child-like backpack
- Mentholated rub or inhaler
- Surgical/dust masks

Pacifiers and lollipops are often used by Ecstasy users guard against the teeth grinding that comes from involuntary jaw clenching. Candy necklaces and Smarties are sometimes used to hide Ecstasy pills. Glow sticks and jewelry, mentholated rubs and masks are used to stimulate the senses while using the drug.

What Do I Do If I Think Someone I Know is Using Ecstasy?

If someone close to you is exhibiting signs of Ecstasy or other illegal drug use, monitor his/her behavior carefully. Talk with the person and voice your concerns. Do not, however, make direct accusations. Stay calm and rational during your discussion. Ask a lot of questions and do a lot of listening. Remember, the warning signs of drug use could be connected to emotional problems or a physical illness not related to drug use. If you have evidence of Ecstasy or club drug use, approach the person when he or she is sober, and if necessary, call on family members and friends to support you in the confrontation. If the person is under the influence of drugs and immediate intervention is necessary, seek medical attention.