



## **ECSTASY-TIPS FOR PARENTS**

Recently we have heard a lot in the media about Ecstasy, other “Club Drugs” and “raves”. As Parents it is often hard to know how concerned we should be about these new trends. These Drugs and social activities can seem so foreign in contrast to what our experiences were, when we were growing up. If you have decided to read this, chances are you are concerned about preventing your child from using or becoming harmfully involved with these drugs or this lifestyle. You may feel you need to intervene with your child who is already using or experimenting.

Based on recent alcohol and other drug surveys we feel confident in saying that the number of Manitoba youth using ecstasy is still relatively small in comparison to the use of other drugs like alcohol and cannabis. That being said, some youth are experimenting and using drugs like Ecstasy, and parents who are concerned that their child is using or at risk should be aware of the dangers and resources available.

## **ECSTASY-WHAT IS IT?**

**Ecstasy, MDMA (Methylenedioxymethamphetamine)** is a synthetic, psychoactive (mind-altering) drug with hallucinogenic and amphetamine-like properties. Slang names include E, XTC, X, Adam, Euphoria, rave and Love Doves.

Ecstasy is sold illegally as a loose white powder or in gelatin capsules or tablets. Tablets are small and a variety of colours. The tablets may be stamped with a Nike swoosh, a dove, a hammer and sickle, or a diamond

on one side. Ecstasy is taken orally as a pill, can be snorted, or injected. The time in which it takes to feel the drug effect depends on the mode in which it was taken. Effects can begin almost immediately and last 3-6 hours.

One serious concern is that sometimes drugs which look similar to Ecstasy, have been sold as Ecstasy. PMA (Para-methoxy-amphetamine, 4-MA) is a powerful stimulant, which is cheaper and easier to manufacture. This drug is more hazardous than Ecstasy. Many of these pills are stamped with a three diamond Mitsubishi Logo. Several deaths in the United States and Australia have been linked to PMA. **The difficulty in buying illicit drugs is that you never really know what you're getting, you are taking the word of a dealer, who, may in fact be supporting his/her own habit. Drugs may be "passed off" as one thing when they are, in fact, something very different.**

## **WHAT ARE THE SHORT TERM EFFECTS?**

- Strong sense of pleasure, confidence and well-being.
- Increased sense of alertness, sociability, communication skills, openness, empathy, caring and closeness with others.
- Decrease in defensiveness, fear, aggression and sexual behavior.
- Excess energy and hyperactivity or intense relaxation.
- Dry mouth and throat, nausea or vomiting, loss of appetite.
- Increase in heart rate, blood pressure and breathing.
- Blood flow to muscles increases causing muscle cramping and tension.
- Pupils dilate, eyes move rapidly and vision can be blurred.
- Jaw muscles clench and teeth grind leading to jaw pain.
- Increase in sweating or chills, faintness, and fatigue.
- Confusion, anxiety, depression, paranoia or panic attacks lasting for several weeks have been reported after a single dose.
- Distortions in perception, time, thinking and memory.

## **WHAT ARE THE LONG TERM EFFECTS?**

- Regular users have reported increased physical discomfort, or "hangovers", as well as weight loss, exhaustion, flashbacks, irritability, paranoia, depression, psychosis and loss of desired drug effects. Tolerance develops quickly.
- Symptoms of confusion, depression and anxiety can be strong enough for clinical treatment.
- Fatigue, sleep problems, panic, paranoia and suicidal feeling for those who are susceptible have been reported weeks after taking the drug.
- Frequent users may be at serious risk for jaundice and liver damage, which may be indicated by a rash that looks like acne.

## WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

-Ecstasy, when combined with intense physical activity, such as dancing, can lead to dehydration, hypertension and an increase in body temperature. This can lead to muscle breakdown, heart and kidney failure.

-Fainting, liver failure, heart attacks, strokes, seizures, and, in some cases, deaths have been reported.

-It can interfere with blood clotting causing individuals to bruise easily or start to bleed from their mouth nose or gastrointestinal tract.

-Ecstasy has been known to be combined with other drugs such as LSD, speed, Heroin or ephedrine. **As with other illegal drugs, it is impossible to know how safe it will be or what effects you might experience.** One slip from a street chemist can contaminate the final product.

-When tested on animals, chronic use is reported to cause long term, perhaps even permanent brain and memory impairment.

## WHAT ARE SIGNS MY CHILD MAY BE USING?

Adolescence can be a troubling, confusing time for both young people and their family members. In becoming alert to the possibility of a chemical problem, it is necessary to attempt to separate those adolescent behaviors which are transitory indications of a struggle to “grow up” from those which indicate the presence of chemical abuse.

### **The following may be potential signs of chemical use in Adolescence.**

- A decline in school performance
- Failure to inform parents of school events, including requests for parents to meet with teachers, suspensions, etc.
- Loss of interest in school activities, including dropping out of athletics, clubs, or other extracurricular activities
- Calls to parents from the school regarding absences, being late, vandalism, fighting, thefts, or suspicion of use
- Problems with the law, which may or may not be drug or alcohol related
- Problems with finances
- Involvement in thefts
- Family members begin missing money or valuables
- Sale of possessions

- Inability to save money despite having an allowance or a job
- Changing or losing jobs
- Appearance of having more money than usual
- Exchanging money with friends
- Frequent mood changes, personality changes
- Extreme highs and lows
- Withdrawal from family members
- Secretiveness, stays physically isolated in room, withdraws to music
- Agitation, or depression
- Increasing dishonesty, lying, elaborate stories
- Increasing defensiveness
- Communication avoidance
- Increasing anger or defiance
- Verbally or physically abusive behavior
- Loss of energy, apathy
- Daily routine inversion; frequently stays out late and sleeps late in the morning or into the afternoon
- General psychological impairment and inability to reason: memory loss; inability to think logically; feelings of paranoia
- Rundown appearance, frequent colds, flu or other illnesses due to decreased immunity
- Loss of normal appetite
- Decline in personal hygiene
- Drastic weight changes
- Pallor or flushed appearance
- Injuries without an explanation
- Self injury, self inflicted tattoos, burns, cutting
- Sleep disturbances
- Discovery of drug paraphernalia, pills, powder, pipes, spoons
- Changes in pupil dilation
- Blackouts, inability to remember events which occur during use
- Clothing which depicts drug culture
- Returning under the influence
- Talk about getting high or using
- Increasing irresponsibility in family responsibilities, chores, household tasks
- Defiance of rules
- Avoidance of family gatherings
- Inciteful behavior, or aggravating increasing tension between parents
- Family members more fearful of the adolescent
- Staying out late

- Blaming others for problems
- Family members increasing preoccupation with the adolescent as the center of their anger, apprehension, and suspicion, or of their care and concern

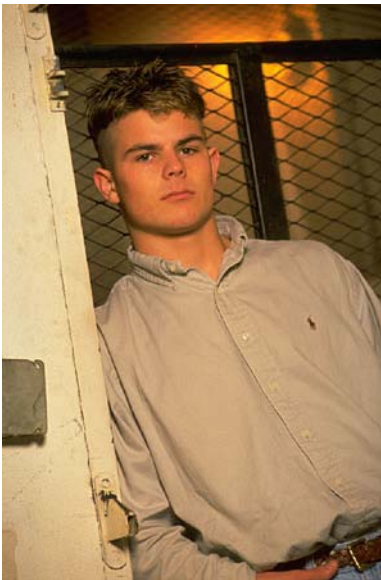
## **HOW CAN I TALK TO MY CHILD TO PREVENT THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH THIS DRUG?**

Talking to your child about the risks of adolescent alcohol and drug use is something that you should do regularly. Kids change and grow and their need for information changes as well. Talking to them about why people may be attracted to using in the first place may be a good place to start. **Kids often share more when we talk less and ask them to help us understand what their fears and concerns are.** Helping children anticipate situations where they may be asked to try mood-altering substances is important as it allows kids to think about how they could choose to respond in certain situations. As parents we can help them brainstorm responses which may allow them to “get off the hook” when feeling pressured. Kids tend to experience their feelings intensely and they need first, our true understanding of the importance of these feelings, and secondly our help with how they can cope with them.

## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A PROBLEM?**

**One of the first things you need to do if you suspect a problem is to talk to your child.** Try to be as specific as possible about what your concerns are. Tell your child what your feelings are about them using drugs. Try to begin sentences with “I feel...”, “I care about you, therefore...” etc.. Make sure that if you have a partner, and you are going to both sit down and confront this, that you have spoken beforehand and are united about how you should proceed. You may want to consult an addictions counselor specializing with youth before sitting down with your child. A counselor may suggest your child have an alcohol and drug assessment. At the **Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, Youth Services Program**, an assessment will likely consist of a four-day awareness and assessment group. This group will allow a counselor to assess your child, as your child gets the opportunity to learn more factual information about Alcohol and other drugs and the effects of such drugs. This type of intervention may seem extreme, and if you feel you need more information before proceeding with formal intervention, there are more options available to you. **The Parents Intervention Program** is a program designed for parents like your self

who are concerned about their children using alcohol and other drugs. Many parents come because they are unsure about how concerned they should be. In the Parents Intervention Program we will help you understand what puts kids at risk for using. We will talk about how you can tell if your son or daughter has a problem with mood-altering substances. The Program also introduces some response strategies that may assist you in intervening with your child. We recognize the importance of introducing you to a support system that you can use in getting guidance and understanding for dealing with this new and often frightening experience. More information on our programs is available at <http://www.afm.mb.ca>



## **RESOURCES**

ADDICTIONS FOUNDATION OF MANITOBA-YOUTH SERVICES  
WINNIPEG-200 Osborne St. N., 944-6235  
(Call the office above for a listing of rural offices and locations).

**SOURCES:** ABCs of Ecstasy, AADAC. 1998.  
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Drugs and Drug Abuse. ARF.  
Buzzed. Kuhn, Swartzwelder, Wilson.

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Substance Misuse. 1998  
When Chemicals Come to School, Gary Anderson, 1987.