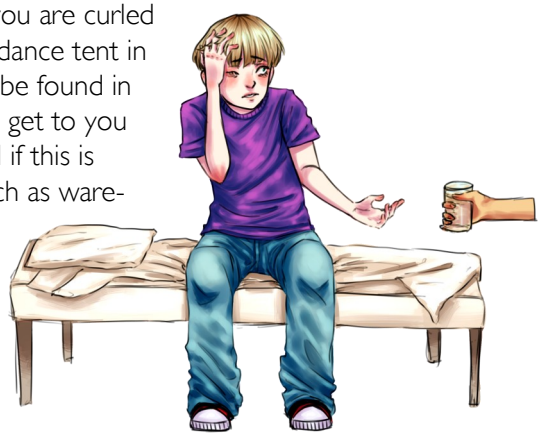
9: Help is available from on-site medics or First Aid tents. Some festivals will have specialist drugs workers on site. But they need to be able to find you and get to you. If you are curled up in a ball at the back of the dance tent in the dark, the risk is you won't be found in time. It can also take longer to get to you and get you off site to hospital if this is needed. Unlicensed events such as warehouse parties may not have any medical help on site and it can be difficult for emergency services to get on site at all.



10: Memorable: it's what you hope your festival will be. A bad pill experience could make it memorable for all the wrong reasons. If it does go wrong it could ruin your festival, and in worst case scenarios be life-threatening. Have a think now, before you are caught up in the festival moment, taking a pill for the first time is something you really want to do.

More information:

There is a lot of information on the internet about MDMA.
Do research about use, risks, and harm-reduction.
Visit www.talktofrank.com/ to find your local source of advice, information and help.

Disclaimer: All use of illicit substances can be risky. Nothing in this leaflet is intended to endorse or encourage drug use. It is intended to provide non-judgmental information to people considering drug use, to allow them to reach an informed decision.
Text: Kevin Flemen **Illustrations:** Roisin Seiffert
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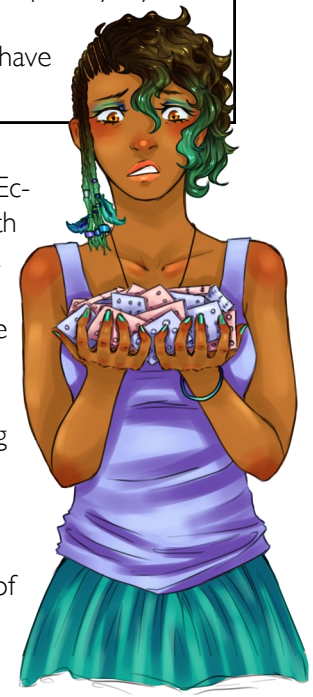
FEST-E

Ten reasons why taking Ecstasy for the first time at a summer festival is not a great idea

So the summer festival season is upon you. Maybe exams are over. You've bagged tickets for your festival of choice. Wellies, tent, sleeping bag are packed. There are a lot of bands to see, friends to catch up with, food-poisoning to dodge. And maybe the time to take a pill for the first time?

If you are thinking about taking Ecstasy (MDMA, Molly, E, XTC, Eckies) for the first time, a summer festival may not be the best time and place to do it. Actually, this goes for other drugs too, both legal and illegal ones. There are always risks with taking substances at any time. But these risks are greater in festival settings especially if you haven't had much previous experience.

So before you take something at a festival please have a think about the following points:



1: Will you start low? If you are taking a drug like Ecstasy for the first time it is less risky if you start with a very low "tester" dose first – to check you don't react badly. You can then choose to increase doses slowly to find your "optimum" dose. But the risk is at a festival you'll take a larger dose in one go without doing a tester. This is always dangerous, but especially if you have never used the drug before.

2: Mixing drugs is always risky, especially if you are unfamiliar with them. Taking them on top of lots of alcohol or anything else you have taken increases the chance of things going wrong. The odds are by the time you get round to taking pills at a festival, you've already got other things in your system.

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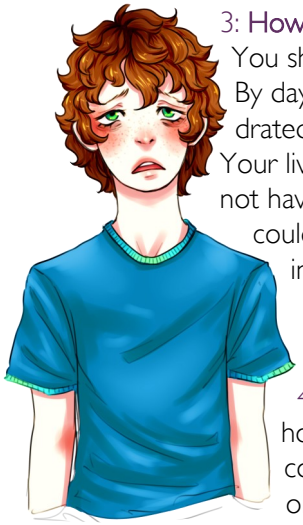
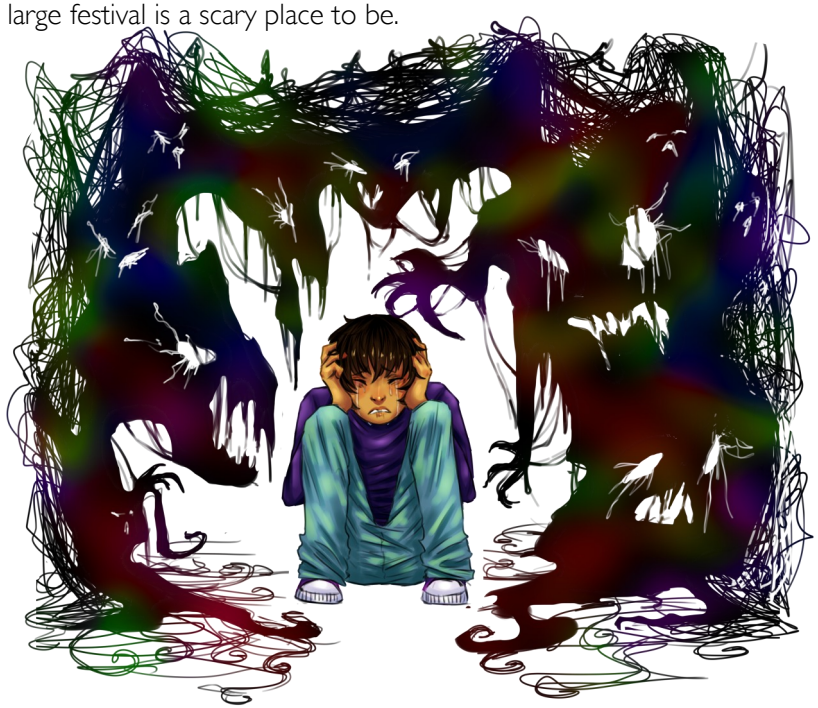
Learning of Substance



3: How you feel before taking drugs is important. You should be in good physical and mental health. By day two of a festival you may well be a bit dehydrated, tired, possibly have been binge drinking. Your liver could already be overworked and you may not have been eating properly so your blood sugars could be out of whack. Taking pills at this stage increases the risk.

4: Where you take a drug has a big impact on how you experience it. You hope it will be a colourful lively experience. It could be a scary one, surrounded by thousands of strangers, noise and nothing familiar around you. If it goes wrong, a large festival is a scary place to be.



5: What you take is always a gamble. This is especially true at festivals. It's a big pay-day for people selling drugs. They come from all over the country and are pretty sure that they won't see their customers again. So the range and strength of drugs will vary massively. The pill or powder that you take could be very strong, contain no active drug or be something completely different to what you hoped for.

6: Friends are essential to keep you safe. They can keep an eye on you and get help if anything goes wrong. But at a festival it's all too easy for people to lose you, get bored looking after you or just get distracted as you wander off. You are much safer with people that you know well and trust but that's not easy in the middle of a festival.

7: Hazards are everywhere – fires to step into, tent lines to trip over, broken glass to stand on, people who may take advantage of you. Festivals are a high risk environment for taking drugs that alter perception or judgment.

8: Police are set up at some festivals to detect and act on a large number of drug offences rapidly. This could mean that you have to leave the festival site and could end up with police action. Worst case scenario is that you end up with a criminal record. This could affect any gap-year travel plans too. Possession of a class A drug like MDMA is a serious offence. Supply, which can include sharing a pill with a friend, is treated even more seriously and can result in a significant custodial sentence.