

MDMA – A Harm Reduction Guide for First-Time Users

This guide is about the drug MDMA (E, Ecstasy, Eckies, Molly, Pills). It is for inexperienced users, who intend to use for the first time. The advice is intended to reduce risk for people determined to use MDMA. It is not intended to encourage use.

Using any illegal drug is risky. Nothing in this guide can make it safe. The only way to completely avoid the risks is not to use MDMA.

Before:

Research: Do more research. Read up on doses, duration, effects, risks, side effects.

Rethink: only do this if you are sure; don't feel pressured.

Your health: If you have physical or mental health problems such as epilepsy, heart problems, asthma, depression, panic or anxiety attacks use is more risky. You are well-advised not to use.

Don't mix: Don't use MDMA on top of other drugs, including alcohol, or medication

Dealing: don't buy or carry pills for friends; it's supply of a Class A drug

The place: Use where you feel safe and comfortable. Remove or avoid hazards. Chaotic environments like a festival are more risky.

The people: Don't use alone, but with a person or people you trust (literally) with your life. At least one person should not use anything themselves, and will look after you and get help if needed.

The drug: You are buying an illegal drug of unknown strength and quality. You can't tell if it is MDMA or something else.

- Pills and powders can contain a range of compounds. It could be MDMA, something similar, or something completely different. PMA, found in some pills sold as 'Ecstasy' is highly toxic and has caused fatalities. Pure MDMA can also kill especially a large dose. You cannot tell by sight, smell or taste what is in a pill or powder.

- www.pillreports.com reports on E-type pills around the world and has warnings about pills. A good review of a pill doesn't mean it is the same one you have or you will get on with it. Discard a pill if it has warnings about it.

- If you are buying pills at a club or a festival, ask people what they've had. Check with festival or club welfare teams for warnings about dodgy pills.

- Just because the person who sold you the pill tells you it's good/strong/pure don't just jump in. Proceed slowly with care.

At the start:

Start Low Begin with a low dose:

Pills: quarter of a pill maximum;

Powders no more than 1/10th of a gram (swallowed), less if snorting. (1/10th gram is about the same as three or four grains of rice.)

Patience: Wait at least two hours before using any more: some dangerous drug show up slowly

Unpleasant effects? Don't take more of the substance or anything else.

No effects? Don't take more of this or anything else: it may be doing something behind the scenes even if you can't feel it.

Enjoyable effects? If you want to take more don't take everything in one go. Use maybe half as much as you did for the first dose. Only do this once, or better still don't have any more this first time.

During:

- Chewing gum can help jaw cramps.

- Stay hydrated but don't overdo it. (see below)

- MDMA can make people touchy and huggy or sexually aroused. Stay with friends you trust. Have condoms with you to keep yourself safe.

Water: too little or too much?

Too little and too much water are both dangerous. Dehydration increases risk of overheating. Too much can cause life-threatening swelling to the brain.

- Drink water before use to ensure you are hydrated;

- Sip about a pint of fluids (non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated) per hour. Sports recovery drinks (not energy drinks) replace fluids and vital chemicals too;

- Don't worry if you can't pee; it's a side effect of MDMA and doesn't mean you are dehydrated

Overheating: MDMA can cause body temperature to go dangerously high. To reduce the risk:

- get out of hot rooms/spaces and cool down

- Take off hat/jacket

- Take time off from dancing to rest and chill

- Stay hydrated

- Get into fresh air and splash cold water on face and neck

- Avoid activities like driving, having a bath, or trying to cook things until you are fully recovered.

- The main effects of MDMA should wear off after about 3-5 hours but it will remain in the body for longer. As it wears off resist the temptation to take more. Taking additional doses now could be more risky and less pleasant.

After using MDMA:

- Give yourself a good chance to recover and take it easy;
- Rest, eat properly, drink fluids;
- have a few weeks off from doing pills, powders or anything else fully recover;
- You may experience low mood and depression a few days after use. If you are looking after yourself, eating and resting it should only last a day or so. If it persists tell someone about it;
- If you had a bad time, tell people at the local drug-project, festival welfare and websites. Tell them what you took and how it felt so that they can learn from your experience.

More information:

There is a lot of information on the internet about MDMA. Do research about use, risks, self-care and harm-reduction.

www.pill-report.com: international pill-reports

http://www.drugs-forum.com/ drugs discussion website with lots of user-generated information

http://www.whatmarthadidnext.org/ website set up by Anne-Marie Cockburn, after her daughter died from an MDMA overdose.

http://www.dancesafe.org/ a US-based club-drug resource site

1st Time with a new powder or pill (Youtube):

bit.ly/1o0DfaX – animation about using unknown compounds for the first time

www.talktofrank.com/ find your local agency for more help and advice

Emergencies: Both the person taking MDMA and the person with them should read this section, be aware of warning signs and how to respond:

Panic attacks: if you feel or someone you are looking after start getting panicky (heart racing, breathing getting very fast, feeling very anxious) the following might help:

- Sit down with your back against something solid (wall, fence);
- Bring knees up and have head between knees;
- Take deep regular breaths in through the nose and breath out through the mouth;
- If you are helping a person who is panicking, provide reassurance, by talking calmly and ensuring that they aren't being hassled by lots of people;
- If the symptoms get worse or there are persisting chest pains seek medical help urgently.

Convulsions: MDMA and related compounds can cause convulsions. If you are with someone having a convulsion:

- Don't try to restrain them or put anything in their mouth
- Do move furniture or other hazards out of the way so the person won't hit them
- Do place a pillow, cushion or folded jacket under the person's head cushion it
- Always send someone to get help

Overheating: MDMA-type drugs can cause a dangerous increase in body temperature. This can be fatal. Signs of overheating aren't always easy to spot but can include:

- Feeling very hot
- Stopping sweating
- Cramps in legs and arms
- Headaches
- Feeling anxious or panicky

Dealing with overheating:

- It's a medical emergency: dial 999 or get on-site medics to help;
- Keep the person cool;
- Get them in to fresh air. (At a festival this includes taking them out of sleeping bag or tent);
- Remove any heavy outer clothes;
- Spray them with cool water;
- If they are shaking or convulsing don't restrain them as this will make them hotter;
- Don't try and make them drink anything at this stage – it could make things worse;
- Tell the emergency services the person may have taken an MDMA-type drug.

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.

First E: HR © KFx 2014: