**ECSTASY and related drugs**

Ecstasy is the common name for Methylene DioxyMethamphetamine, or MDMA. Street slang names include: evey, ‘E’, or pills.

MDMA was first made in Germany in 1912. In the 1970s, a chemist Alexander Shulgin regrettably tested it in a controlled environment as a therapeutic tool to help their clients explore their feelings. By the 1980s, MDMA was being recreationally, and had been adopted by the dance party culture in Ibiza and Goa where it was used at ‘rave’ and ‘dance’ parties to help party-goers dance all night. MDMA is fast electronic music. This eventually spread to other parts of the world, including Australia.

**Drug effects**

Ecstasy is classified as a stimulant with hallucinogenic properties or hallucinogenic amphetamine, which means it combines the effects of hallucinogens and stimulants. It is commonly known to make users feel warm and loving, even towards people they may not know well. Ecstasy is primarily used for its euphoric, mood-altering effect, which makes it a popular stimulant for dancing and partying. The short-term effects of using ecstasy may include:

- Increased self-confidence, well being and feeling close to others
- A rise in blood pressure, body temperature, pulse rate and sweating
- Jaw clenching and teeth grinding

A hangover effect on the next day, which makes concentration difficult

Symptoms can include loss of appetite, insomnia, depression and muscle aches

Heightened sexual desire and intensification of the sexual experience.

People who use ecstasy usually use MDMA or similar drugs, which affect those with high blood pressure, a heart condition, on certain prescription medication, diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, depression or other mental illness.

Effects start after about 20 minutes to an hour and can last up to six hours, may last as long as 32 hours. Some ecstasy users experiment with injecting the drug, but rarely do this regularly, as the effect has been reported as being quite overpowering.

MDMA seems to work by boosting the levels of two brain chemicals:

- Serotonin, which is the neurotransmitter that creates feelings of well-being and pleasure
- Dopamine, which affects mood and muscle control and acts as a pain suppressor.

**If a person is experiencing symptoms of psychosis**

Take the person to a quiet place away from noise and people.

Make sure they don’t take any more ecstasy.

Give them reassurance and stay calm. Don’t argue with them, even if what they say does not make sense. Don’t leave them alone.

**Tips for families**

Some tips for supporting a loved one with an ecstasy problem are to avoid panicking and get information about the effects of ecstasy use.

Keep communicating and avoid prescribing or nagging. Don’t only talk about the problem. Choose your moment to express your concern. Encourage them to try to reduce some of the risks of using ecstasy. If they use in a regular social group, encourage a few friends to look after each other, and to be aware of what to do if there are problems.

Learn the signs, and know what to do in an emergency. Do not allow an administer a psychedelic episode. Have contact numbers readily available. If there is violence, have a safety plan in place. It’s important not to measure what you have to be at risk.

It’s okay to talk about it. Get support for yourself as well as your loved one. If they don’t want help.

FDS - acknowledgement to National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC)