

From Ecstasy to Agony

It's Friday night. Your 19-year-old college student has been invited to a "rave" (a large, all-night dance party). Friends tell her it's the hot new thing. Curious, she accepts. As she walks into the club, someone whisks her away and hands her a tiny pill called ecstasy.

"Take this and you'll be able to dance all night. You'll have lots of energy and feel great."

"Really?" your daughter responds. "Sounds intriguing."

What your daughter—and many other teens who are being exposed to this drug—may not know is that ecstasy isn't harmless fun. The potential consequences of this now popular "club drug" include serious psychological and physical damage. For those who choose to experiment, the promise of ecstasy often leads to agony.

You may have heard about ecstasy, or E, as it's often referred to on the street. Other names include "XTC," "Adam," "Clarity," and "Lover's Speed." The chemical properties of ecstasy (Methylenedioxymethamphetamine, or MDMA) are similar to stimulant amphetamines and the hallucinogen mescaline. Thus, the effects of it are both stimulant and psychedelic.

Ecstasy is said to be the staple at raves. The drug became illegal in 1985, but its use, according to the National

Institute of Drug Abuse, is reportedly increasing in 20 metropolitan areas studied. The heaviest users (1.4 million people) are those between the ages of 18 and 25.

This designer drug is produced in clandestine laboratories and is a molecular alteration of an existing drug. Taken in high doses, it can be extremely dangerous and even fatal. When it is combined with alcohol, the potential for harm increases.

Here is what teens say about tripping after taking the oral or capsule form of ecstasy: "I am wired, happy, clear, don't care, have energy, feel relaxed and uninhibited, and nothing bothers me." But after the ride, the comments change to: "I feel depressed, desperate, hung over, exhausted, edgy and paranoid—and I want more."

This cycle of a high followed by a letdown repeats every time the drug is used. The more frequent the use, the greater the potential for becoming psychologically dependent on the drug. Studies show that it is physically addictive as well. And the side effects are scary:

Confusion, depression, sleep problems, anxiety and paranoia that can last for weeks after the drug is taken

Increased body temperature that can lead to muscle breakdown and cardiovascular system failure

An ability to sustain long bouts of physical exercise that can lead to dehydration, hypertension and heart or kidney failure

Increased heart rate and blood pressure

Potentially long-lasting and perhaps permanent damage to neurons that release serotonin. Serotonin plays a role in regulating emotion, memory, sleep, pain and other processes.

If you choose to take the little “happy pill,” remember: At best, you’ll get high; at worst, you could die. Also, you never know if what you are taking has been “laced”—mixed with some other substances that could be lethal.

Parents need to educate their children on this and other “club drugs.” Teens may be confronted with the pill and should know how to respond. Teach them to think twice before following the crowd.

Some kids may be tempted to experiment out of curiosity and must be made aware of the seriousness of such a decision. Other kids need help dealing with underlying problems that lead to drug abuse such as feeling inadequate or powerless, being stressed to the point of looking for ways to escape reality, and struggling with poor coping skills or family dysfunction. And if the spiritual life of a teen or young adult is not strong, there is little help to fight off temptation.

Obviously, the best weapon against any kind of drug use is an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Teens who are heavenly connected are less likely to search for happiness and unfulfilled needs through substances.

Encourage your teen to stay plugged in to the true power

source. A strong parental connection is also a major deterrent to any bad teen behavior. *

Taken in high doses, ecstasy can be extremely dangerous.

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