"Ecstasy"

The proper name of "ecstasy" is MDMA, which stands for methylenedioxymethamphetamine. Like other amphetamines, MDMA is a central nervous system stimulant and also hallucinogenic.

On taking MDMA, abusers may have a feeling of boundless energy and thus commonly take the drugs to help them to dance for lengthy periods. The truth is, MDMA deplete the serotonin in the central nervous system, causing convulsions of muscles (usually muscles of the four limbs and the neck). Therefore, all those "shaking and dancing" are actually uncontrollable behaviour of the abusers.

Street Names

"Ecstasy", "E", "XTC", "Adam"

What It Looks Like

MDMA is usually sold as round tablets of various colours (pink, white, green, etc) impressed with a multitude of logos, mostly 8mm in diameter. Many MDMA tablets are adulterated with ketamine, amphetamine or methamphetamine and some are also adulterated with caffeine, phenobarbitone or methaqualone.

Effects and Dangers

- Relate to over-exercise, which leads to dehydration, exhaustion, muscle breakdown, over-heating of the body and eventually convulsion or collapse
- Insomnia
- Lead to unpleasant and frightening experiences
- Cause sudden death from respiratory failure
- Cause renal and liver failure
- Cause depression and psychosis
- Neural cell damage

Special Dangers

"Ecstasy" is popular in rave parties because the stimulant effect of the drug enables the user to dance for extended periods. However, there are serious adverse
consequences. These include psychological disorders, such as confusion, depression, sleep problem, anxiety and paranoia during, and sometimes weeks after taking the drug; and physical effects including muscle tension, involuntary teeth clenching, nausea, blurred vision, faintness, chills and sweating. Increase in heart rate and blood pressure poses a special risk, especially for people with circulatory or heart disease. A combination of the above mentioned harmful effects together with the hot crowded condition commonly found in rave parties can lead to dehydration, and heart or kidney failure.

Ecstasy also causes damage to the neurons. Recent research findings link MDMA use to long-term damage to those parts of the brain critical to thought and memory, producing chronic disorders that range from memory loss to motor disturbances.

Since the drug is only available illicitly, its strength may vary considerably and it may contain harmful impurities. Some of the purported MDMA tablets contain no MDMA but substituted with something else altogether. These substitutes may be more dependence forming (such as methamphetamine), or more prone to induce overdose (such as methaqualone at grossly elevated dosages) or having properties seemingly antagonistic to those of MDMA (such as ketamine). These variants and mixtures obviously pose serious risks for the uninformed user.

The associated reduction in inhibitions combined with a sense of invulnerability can undermine safe sex practices.

**Legal Aspects**

MDMA is a dangerous drug controlled under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance. It is an offence to illegally produce, possess or supply MDMA.