



Know! To Steer Youth Clear of Psychedelics

Psilocybin, the active ingredient in psychedelic mushrooms, is in the spotlight in America. Studies are currently evaluating its potential for medical benefits—a measure that may provide a false sense of safety around its use, especially among teens. In the previous tip, “[Know! What’s Up With Psilocybin](#),” we discussed the shift in attitude toward psychedelic drugs in the U.S., as voters in Oregon legalized psilocybin and voters in Colorado decriminalized its use. In turn, this can reduce young people’s perception of psilocybin’s harm.

Regardless of law or potential medical uses however, psilocybin is a powerful, dangerous hallucinogenic drug. Youth must be made clearly aware of these dangers and empowered to steer clear of this drug.

[So, Let’s Get More Familiar with this Drug](#)

Mushrooms containing psilocybin exist on every continent in the world, including here in the United States. These psychedelic mushrooms are made available either fresh or dried and are typically brewed as a tea, covered in chocolate or mixed with food to help hide their unpleasant, bitter taste. Many of them are poisonous and some are even fatally so.

Once consumed, the body converts the psilocybin into psilocyn. Psilocyn impacts serotonin, the hormone in our brain that regulates mood, feelings of well-being, and happiness. Psilocybin’s hallucinogenic effects, or “trip,” usually begin within 30-45 minutes of ingestion and can last up to six hours.

When “tripping” on psilocybin, users experience an altered sense of time and space, along with intense changes in mood and feeling. Behavior may become strange and erratic, potentially including

overwhelming emotions and bouncing thoughts that cause users to become a danger to themselves.

There is a long list of additional possible effects of psilocybin, including:

- Euphoria, peacefulness, spiritual awakening
- Quickly changing emotions
- **Derealization**, or the feeling that your surroundings are not real
- Depersonalization, or a dream-like sense of being disengaged from your surroundings
- Frightening hallucinations
- Distorted thinking, confusion and paranoia
- Inability to effectively speak or communicate, or talking nonsense
- Visual alteration and distortion, such as halos of light and vivid colors
- Dilated pupils
- Nausea and vomiting
- Yawning and drowsiness
- Numbness in the face
- Dizziness, lightheadedness, and twitching
- Muscle weakness and loss of basic motor skills
- Unusual body sensations

One cannot predetermine the length and intensity of a trip, or if one will have a good or bad trip, as effects vary from one individual to another based on differences in mental state, past experiences, expectations for this experience, the user's personality, their immediate environment, and the potency of the psilocybin. There is also no way to stop a bad trip, which can go on for hours.

The effects of psilocybin do not always end when the "trip" is over. Ongoing anxiety and a loss of reality may continue. Traumatic flashbacks may also occur several days, months or even years after use.

Psilocybin mushroom use can trigger underlying mental health disorders, intensify current mental health conditions, and lead to psychosis.

The most dangerous risk of psilocybin use is mistaken identity—many poisonous mushrooms are similar in appearance to mushrooms containing psilocybin. It's easy to accidentally choose a poisonous, even lethal, mushroom instead of one containing psilocybin.

As more cities and states consider decriminalizing and legalizing the use of psychedelics, more youth will talk about them, and potentially consider their use. It is important that we step in to be their information filter and provider, so that youth know the facts and can make informed decisions to avoid a dangerous mistake.

Sources

[Libby Lyons, MSW, LCSW, CEDS., Addiction Hope: Mushroom Abuse Among Teenagers: Tips for Parents.](#)

[Kathleen Davis, MedicalNewsToday: What are magic mushrooms and psilocybin? Jan. 2019.](#)

[Markus MacGill, MedicalNewsToday: What is Psychosis. Sept. 2020.](#)

[Next Generation Village, Teen Drug and Alcohol Rehab: Psilocybin Mushrooms.](#)

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