

# Tips for Teens: Hallucinogens: The Truth About Hallucinogens

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# Tips for Teens: Hallucinogens

## *The Truth About Hallucinogens*

### The Truth About Hallucinogens

Slang—Lysergic acid diethylamide: LSD, Acid, Blotter. Psilocybin: Magic Mushrooms, Shrooms. Phencyclidine: PCP, Angel Dust, Boat, Ozone, Wack. Ecstasy: E, X, XTC.

#### Get the Facts...

**Hallucinogens affect your brain.** Hallucinogens change the way the brain interprets time, reality, and the environment around you. They also affect the way you move, react to situations, think, hear, and see. This may make you think that you're hearing voices, seeing images, and feeling things that don't exist.

**Hallucinogens affect your heart.** The use of hallucinogens leads to an increase in heart rate and blood pressure. Hallucinogens can put you in a coma. They can also cause heart and lung failure.

**Hallucinogens affect your well-being.** The use of hallucinogens may change the way you feel emotionally. They may cause you to feel confused, suspicious, and disoriented. Many PCP users are brought to emergency rooms because of PCP overdose or its disturbing psychological effects, including delusions and paranoia.<sup>1</sup>

**Hallucinogens affect your self-control.** The effect of hallucinogens varies from time to time and person to person, so there is no way to know how much self-control you might maintain. They can cause you to mix up your speech, lose control of your muscles, make meaningless movements, and act in irrational, aggressive, or violent ways.

#### Before You Risk It...

**Know the law.** Hallucinogens are illegal to buy, sell, or possess.

**Get the facts.** Hallucinogenic drugs distort your perception of reality. Hallucinogens cause your sense of space and time to become distorted and cause you to see objects that aren't really there.

**Stay informed.** The body can quickly form a tolerance to a hallucinogen, so a person would have to take more and more of the drug for the same effect. This is very dangerous because taking stronger doses of any drug may cause severe side effects, including overdose.

**Know the risks.** Hallucinogens can cause flashbacks. Effects of the drugs, including hallucinations, can occur weeks, months, and even years after use.

**Look around you.** The majority of teens are not using hallucinogens. According to a 2006 study, 96 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds have never even tried hallucinogens.<sup>2</sup>

## Know the Signs...

**How can you tell if a friend is using hallucinogens?** Sometimes it's tough to tell. Different hallucinogens have different effects, depending on the dose and the user. If your friend has one or more of the following common warning signs, he or she may be using hallucinogens:

- Distorted sense of sight, hearing, and touch
- Dilated pupils
- Anxiety or paranoia
- Mood swings
- Faintness
- Irrational behavior

**What can you do to help someone who is using hallucinogens?** Be a real friend. Encourage your friend to stop or seek professional help. For information and referrals, call the SAMHSA's Health Information Network at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727).

For more information or for references to facts found in this *Tips for Teens*, go to [www.samhsa.gov/SHIN](http://www.samhsa.gov/SHIN).

## Q & A

**Q. Do hallucinogens have longterm effects?**

A. Yes. In addition to flashbacks, long-term effects may include decreased motivation, prolonged depression, anxiety, increased delusions and panic, and psychosis.

**Q. Can I predict if I will have a “bad trip”?**

A. There is no way to predict a “bad trip.” There is no consistency in hallucinogenic drugs, so each “trip” may differ depending on the drug’s strength and purity. The psychological effects of the hallucinogen also depend on the user’s frame of mind.

**Q. How can I help someone through a bad trip?**

A. Don’t try to handle this situation on your own—call 911 and a trusted adult immediately. While waiting, address the person by name, remind them who and where they are, talk to them calmly, make sure they’re safe, and don’t leave them alone.

## Info

To learn more about hallucinogens or obtain referrals to programs in your community, contact one of the following toll-free numbers:

**SAMHSA’s Health Information Network**

1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

(English and Spanish)

TTY 1-800-487-4889800

**The bottom line:** If you know someone who uses hallucinogens, urge him or her to get help. If you’re using them—stop! The longer you ignore the real facts, the more chances you take with your life. It’s never too late. Talk to your parents, a doctor, a counselor, a teacher, or another adult you trust.

## Do it today!

Curious about the TV ads of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign? Check out the Web site at [www.freevibe.com](http://www.freevibe.com) or visit the Office of National Drug Control Policy Web site at [www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov).