

# THE BASICS

## Magic Mushrooms

### *Do you know?*

- Magic mushrooms, also called shrooms, contain psilocin (4-hydroxy-N, N-dimethyl-tryptamine) and psilocybin (4-phosphoryl-oxy-N, N-dimethyltryptamine). They are hallucinogenic (drugs that change the way you think, see and hear things).
- Only a few species of the 2500 kinds of mushrooms contain psilocin and psilocybin. These species can be found in the wild and harvested, or they can be grown indoors by someone who has set up a magic mushroom growing operation.
- Mushrooms can be eaten fresh or dried, either by themselves or mixed with food. They can also be made into tea. Psilocybin can also come as a white powder that can be taken in capsules or mixed with juice.
- A typical dose is between 4 mg and 10 mg (two to four mushrooms of one variety, 10 to 40 mushrooms of another variety). Strength varies between mushrooms, so it's hard to know exactly how much drug you are getting.
- Effects are usually felt 30 to 60 minutes after taking the drug, and they can last from two to six hours.

### *A Special Danger*

Magic mushrooms look like some poisonous mushrooms, so a person could become poisoned by mistakenly eating the wrong kind. Poisonous mushrooms can cause liver and kidney damage, or even death.

### *Short-term Effects*

While using a person may experience:

- relaxed or tired feelings
- mood swings (feeling extremely happy one minute and sad the next)
- a changed sense of:
  - space (feeling out of place or apart from the surroundings)
  - time (time seems to go too fast or slow)
  - consciousness (having unusual thoughts)
- feeling very heavy or very light
- changes in sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch ("seeing" music or "hearing" colours)
- hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't really there)
- feeling confused or paranoid (feeling scared or suspicious for no reason)
- mild increase in blood pressure, heartbeat and breathing
- dizziness, lightheadedness, upset stomach, nausea, shivering or sweating
- numbness of the tongue, lips or mouth
- dilated (big) pupils

### *Long-term Effects*

Little is known about the long-term effects of magic mushrooms because not much research has been done.

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## ***Tolerance and Dependence***

- Users may become psychologically dependent (they feel they need it).
- Magic mushrooms are not known to cause physical dependence (the body does not develop a need for the drug).
- Tolerance (a need for more of the drug to get the desired effect) builds up after a period of daily use to the point where no amount of the drug will get the user high. After staying away from the drug for a few days the user would feel the effects again.

## ***Withdrawal Symptoms***

- Some people may experience a need or craving for the drug.

## ***Other Risks***

- Magic mushrooms that have gone mouldy or bad (dark brown or black) may contain harmful bacterial than can cause illness.
- Magic mushrooms can be laced with other dangerous drugs, such as LSD or PCP.
- Rarely, psychosis may occur in a person who already has mental health problems or a family history of mental illness. A psychotic episode may be triggered in someone with no history of mental health problems. (Psychosis is a condition in which the person does not know what is real and what is not real.)
- A “bad trip” may occur, meaning the person becomes anxious or fearful of what is happening to them.
- People can put themselves in risky situations when on this drug (driving while impaired, having unprotected sex, taking unsafe actions which could cause injury).

## ***Mental Health***

- Substance use and mental health problems often can occur together.
- Substance use may increase the risk of mental health problems.
- People with mental health problems are at higher risk of developing substance abuse problems.
  - Sometimes they use alcohol and other drugs to give themselves a break from mental health symptoms.
  - For most people, though, alcohol and other substance use only covers up the symptoms and may make them worse.

**REMEMBER:** A person's experience with any drug can vary. Here are a few of the many things that may affect the experience: the amount and strength of the drug taken, the setting, a person's mood and expectations before taking the drug, gender, overall health, past experience with that drug and whether more than one drug is being used at the same time. Using alcohol and other drugs at the same time can be dangerous.

### ***Sources and For More Information***

*ABCs of Magic Mushrooms* (information sheet), Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, 2003.

*A Primer of Drug Action*, Robert Julien, Henry Holt and Company, 2001.

*Buzzed*, Duke University Medical Centre, 1998.

*Canadian Health Network Website*: [www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca)

*Fast Facts on Alcohol*, AFM, 2002.

*National Institute on Drug Abuse Website*: [www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov).

*Psilocybin Mushroom Information* (brochure), Vancouver Island Health Authority.

*Straight Facts about Drugs and Drug Abuse*, Health Canada, 2000.

*Street Drugs: A Drug Identification Guide*, Publishers Group, LLC, Plymouth, MN, 2005.

**For more information or for help with a drug or alcohol problem:** Contact your local Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) office or visit the website at [www.afm.mb.ca](http://www.afm.mb.ca). AFM offers a broad range of prevention and rehabilitation services, including harm reduction and abstinence-based programs for alcohol, other drugs and gambling.

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