

LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) is commonly known as “acid.” It belongs to a family of drugs known as hallucinogens.

LSD is very powerful. Pure LSD the size of an aspirin is enough for 3,000 doses. Odourless and tasteless, pure LSD is a fine white powder that is sold in capsules or tablets. It can also be diluted in liquid and then absorbed into blotter paper, sugar cubes, gum, candy, cookies, or even postage stamps that can be eaten or licked.

LSD sold on the street often contains PCP (phencyclidine)—a potentially more dangerous drug.

Possessing, producing and trafficking in LSD can result in fines, prison sentences, and criminal records.

Short-term effects

- The effects of LSD can usually be felt in 30 to 45 minutes and last between six to eight hours.
- LSD affects emotions. Users may feel euphoric (“high”), but this can quickly change to sadness or fear, and back again. Users may even feel more than one emotion at the same time.
- LSD also changes the way you see, smell, hear, taste, and touch. It can cause hallucinations. (You think that you see, hear, or smell things that are not actually there.)
- Trivial matters may suddenly seem important, making you feel as if you are going through a magical experience.
- Other side effects include:
 - increased heartbeat and blood pressure
 - fever, dilated pupils, tremors, nausea, chills, and numbness
 - impaired judgment (distance, speed, time, etc.), and altered memory. (You may find that you cannot remember events that happened immediately before taking the LSD, but you can clearly remember long past events.)
- Sometimes the effects are especially uncomfortable and frightening. This is known as a “bad trip.” If someone is having a bad trip, you can help by calmly reassuring them.
- As is the case with other drugs, LSD affects each user differently. In addition to the size of the dose, effects are influenced by the setting, the user’s expectations, past drug experience, and personality.

Long-term effects

- Some LSD users experience “flashbacks.” They usually involve visual hallucinations from past acid trips, but can involve other senses like taste, smell, and touch. These flashbacks generally last a few seconds or minutes.
- For people with psychological problems, LSD use can result in prolonged psychotic states.
- Although rare, there have been reports of visual disturbances such as prolonged after-images caused by LSD.
- Deaths from LSD overdose have never been reported. However, LSD has been implicated in suicides, accidental deaths, murders, and self-inflicted wounds.
- Some chronic heavy users of LSD show apathy, lack interest in the future, and are easily frustrated.
- People who use drugs often can develop serious personal problems. Using drugs can become more important than family and friends. They may continue using even when their job or schoolwork is suffering, or when they run into financial, spiritual, or legal problems.
- Young people who use drugs heavily may not learn how to solve problems, handle their emotions, and become mature, responsible adults.
- When used by pregnant women, LSD may cause birth defects or miscarriages.

LSD and addiction

Tolerance to LSD can develop very quickly. This means that after taking it for several days, no amount of the drug will produce the desired psychedelic effects. To feel them again, users must abstain for a few days.

LSD does not appear to cause physical dependence, even after long-term use. Regular users can become psychologically dependent. They feel like they need the drug and it becomes the centre of their lives. Without it, they get anxious or even panicky.

For more information and to find an addiction services office near you, please call the 24-hour Helpline at 1-866-332-2322.