



## *Just the Facts...*

### *Ecstasy Use in the Army*

#### **What is Ecstasy?**

Ecstasy is 3,4-methylenedioxyamphetamine (MDMA). It combines the chemical properties of Methamphetamine (speed) with the hallucinogenic properties of Mescaline. Although Ecstasy can be purchased as a powder it is usually sold as a pill in a variety of colors with imprinted logos or symbols. The various colors and symbols help users identify which pills they like and dislike. Ecstasy is typically ingested orally as a pill but can be snorted or injected intravenously. Someone who is high on Ecstasy is said to be “Rolling.”

Ecstasy, as well as, GHB, Rohypnol, Ketamine, Methamphetamine, and LSD have become increasingly popular over the last few years among young adults and have been referred to as Club Drugs. It’s the most commonly used drug in the club drug family. Ecstasy, alone and in combination with other drugs, has been associated with lethal cardiac dysrhythmias (fatal irregular heart beat).

#### **Ecstasy Popularity Increased by The Media and Internet**

Ecstasy’s popularity has increased because the media and the internet have portrayed it as a euphoric love drug that can help solve all problems in a single night without any dangers or negative side effects. Ecstasy is said to make the user feel euphoric, happy, empathetic, and in touch with the people around them.

#### **Club Drug -- The Dangers and Consequences**

The Army is committed to a “Drug Free Fighting Force.” The Army Center for Substance Abuse Programs (ACSAP) has established a “Club Drug Initiative” to disseminate information on the dangers and consequences of club drugs, including ecstasy and the rave culture. This initiative and other tools are in place to help commanders and Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) staff members to educate, deter, and detect illegal drug use. Commanders are encouraged to use these products and to take the following actions:

- Educate – Support a strong prevention education program that includes the dangers of drug use; the effects on them, their families, their unit, and the Army; and the career ending implications of being caught. ACSAP has provided material on their website at [www.acsap.org](http://www.acsap.org) and additional materials may be obtained at your local ASAP.
- Deter – Institute aggressive and unpredictable urinalysis testing. – The Army test approximately 10% of the unit strength each month. Commanders may use other testing patterns such as testing 3-5% of the unit strength each week, varying the days and times of testing, testing on Friday afternoon and then again on Monday morning, testing on an occasional non-duty day, and testing in the field. Commanders should use the Department of Defense (DOD) approved drug Testing Program (DT) software to randomly select soldiers to be tested and print required urinalysis documents and labels. This type of testing, known as “Smart Testing” keeps soldiers honest.
- Detect – Enforce administrative and punitive measures. – Commanders must utilize the tools they have to take appropriate action when drug abusers are identified. Soldiers must believe that they will receive punishment in order for the deterrent effect of drug testing to be effective.

# Fact or Myth of Ecstasy

Soldiers are confronted with a mixture of myths and facts from friends, soldiers, and hundreds of Internet sites that state everything from how safe Ecstasy is to drug-testing laboratories can't test for Ecstasy. The facts are:

a. Ecstasy is a dangerous drug that has the following effects:

- While “rolling” a user is subject to dehydration, exhaustion, hyperthermia, seizures (called “Fishin’ out”), high blood pressure, increased heart rate, and kidney or heart failure.
- The short-term effects of Ecstasy use include depression, increased release of some hormones, anxiety, insomnia, hostility, aggression, and short-term memory impairment.
- The long-term effects of Ecstasy use include depression, anxiety altered sleep patterns, loss of sex drive or impotence (many Ecstasy users take Viagra), obsessive-compulsive disorder, and impaired working memory and recall performance. Scientific research indicates that psychological problems associated with regular Ecstasy use are not reversible by prolonged abstinence.
- The majority of the pills sold as Ecstasy do not even contain Ecstasy; they contain other designer amphetamines/methamphetamines or other drugs or poisons, which may be more harmful than ecstasy.

b. Civilian laboratories typically do not test for Ecstasy, but all DOD laboratories test every single sample for the presence of Ecstasy and other amphetamines.

- The military has been testing every specimen for the presence of THC, cocaine, and amphetamines, including MDMA (Ecstasy), MDEA, and MDA since 1997.
- Current laboratory methods enable the DOD drug testing laboratories to detect and report a positive result for Ecstasy up to 72 hours after ingestion of the drug.
- The DOD drug laboratories, in conjunction with civilian corporations, are testing new Ecstasy specific test kits. The new kits will lengthen the amount of time after ingestion that they will be able to detect and report a positive result for Ecstasy. The extended length of time is yet to be determined.

The Army is committed to a “**Drug Free Fighting Force.**” Drug use/abuse adversely affects the Army’s ability to perform its mission and will not be tolerated. Drug use impacts directly on the safety of the drug user and the other soldiers within his/her unit. It is every leader’s responsibility to educate soldiers, deter drug use, and detect illegal drug abusers.