

Alcohol and Other Drugs

# Understanding hallucinogens.

1800 700 514 (Freecall)  
[unitingvictas.org.au/aod](http://unitingvictas.org.au/aod)

## What are hallucinogens?

The term 'hallucinogens' covers a wide range of naturally occurring and synthetic substances that cause alterations to the way you perceive things and experience reality. Things can look, sound, smell, taste and feel different when you use hallucinogens. You might begin to see or hear things that aren't there, and your perception of time might significantly change.

## Different types of hallucinogens include:

- LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide)
- DMT (Dimethyltryptamine)
- Psilocybin (magic mushrooms)
- PCP (Phencyclidine, 'angel dust')
- Ketamine
- Nitrous oxide (or 'nangs')
- Plants such as ayahuasca, datura, mescaline, peyote and salvia.

## Common effects include:

- Happy and relaxed
- Spiritual connection
- Out-of-body experiences
- Distorted senses

## Negative effects include:

- Aggressive behaviour
- Faster heart rate
- Vomiting and sweating
- Feel frozen or stuck
- Confusion and panic
- Feel overwhelmed
- Hallucination
- Muscle spasms

## Reducing risks

It's often difficult to know how you'll feel when using hallucinogens. Some people might feel euphoric and enjoy their 'trip', while others might be overwhelmed or terrified. A negative experience or 'bad trip' is more likely to happen when people are unprepared or take a large dose. There are some things you can do to minimise the chances of a bad trip.

### Mental state

Make sure you're in a calm and de-stressed mood, and don't use just to escape unwanted feelings. How you're feeling before you take a dose can influence the trip. Hallucinogens can also make people act impulsively in response to new sensations or heightened emotional states.

### Environment

Make sure you eat something light and nutritious beforehand, and are well hydrated and rested. Create a space that's warm and welcoming. Music and lighting that you find relaxing can help this.

### People

Think about using with someone you feel safe and comfortable with. It's important to not use alone, as it's useful to have someone there to ensure you don't try to do anything dangerous if you start to hallucinate or feel confused about what's real. This person is sometimes called a 'trip-sitter' – someone who won't use drugs but who'll be a calm, comforting presence.

# The future is bright.



## Getting support

For some people the after-effects of using hallucinogens can linger for days, weeks or sometimes months. If someone has a personal or family history of mental illness, using hallucinogens can lead to the onset or return of these issues, which can last much longer.

### Some of these longer-term side effects include:

- Flashbacks to the experience of the trip
- Vivid dreams or nightmares
- Panic attacks and heightened reactions
- Feeling depressed.

It's important you seek support if you experience any of these after a trip. Find someone – a family member, friend, or healthcare professional – who you can trust to talk to. You might feel scared to speak about it, especially if you're reliving some of the experiences from the trip, but it's important to reach out and get support.

## Contacts

If you want to talk to someone about your own or someone else's alcohol or other drug use, you can get more information from these Victorian and Tasmanian state-wide services. If you are located in another state, these contacts will direct you to your local support services:

### DirectLine

24/7 service offering counselling, information and referrals.

**T** 1800 888 236

**directline.org.au**

### Harm Reduction Victoria

Support and information from other drug using peers.

**T** 03 9329 1500

**hrvic.org.au**

### QUIT

**T** 13 78 48

**quit.org.au**

### Family Drug and Gambling Help

Victorian support for family members.

**T** 1300 660 068

**sharc.org.au/sharc-programs/family-drug-gambling-help**

### Drug alerts

**health.vic.gov.au/alcohol-and-drugs/drug-alerts**

### Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs Tasmania Service Directory

**atdc.org.au/service-directory**

### Alcohol and Drug Information Service TAS

24/7 service offering counselling, information and referrals.

**T** 1800 811 994

Uniting would like to thank consumer partners for drawing on their lived experience to contribute to this series of publications.

