

Hallucinogens and Dissociative Drugs (For more information call 803-230-3066 – bnorwood@allonboard.org)

What are hallucinogens?

Hallucinogens are drugs that cause hallucinations - profound distortions in a person's perceptions of reality. Under the influence of hallucinogens, people see images, hear sounds, and feel sensations that seem real but do not exist. Some hallucinogens also produce rapid, intense emotional swings.

Hallucinogens cause their effects by disrupting the interaction of nerve cells and the neurotransmitter serotonin. Distributed throughout the brain and spinal cord, the serotonin system is involved in the control of behavioral, perceptual, and regulatory systems, including mood, hunger, body temperature, sexual behavior, muscle control, and sensory perception.

LSD (an abbreviation of the German words for "lysergic acid diethylamide") is the drug most commonly identified with the term "hallucinogen" and the most widely used in this class of drugs.

What are the facts about dissociative drugs?

PCP, developed in the 1950s as an intravenous surgical anesthetic, is classified as a dissociative anesthetic: Its sedative and anesthetic effects are trance-like, and patients experience a feeling of being "out of body" and detached from their environment. PCP has been used in veterinary medicine but was never approved for human use because of problems that arose during clinical studies, including delirium and extreme agitation experienced by patients emerging from anesthesia.

When snorted or smoked, PCP rapidly passes to the brain to disrupt the functioning of sites known as NMDA (N-methyl-D-aspartate) receptor complexes, which are receptors for the neurotransmitter glutamate. Glutamate receptors play a major role in the perception of pain, in cognition - including learning and memory - and in emotion. In the brain, PCP also alters the actions of dopamine, a neurotransmitter responsible for the euphoria and "rush" associated with many abused drugs.

PCP's effects are unpredictable. Typically, they are felt within minutes of ingestion and last for several hours. Some users report feeling the drug's effects for days. One drug-taking episode may produce feelings of detachment from reality, including distortions of space, time, and body image; another may produce hallucinations, panic, and fear. Some users report feelings of invulnerability and exaggerated strength. PCP users may become severely disoriented, violent, or suicidal.

Street Names for Hallucinogens and Dissociative Drugs

LSD - Blotter, Dots, Microdot, Pane, Paper Acid, Sugar, Sugar Cubes, Trip, Window Glass, Window Pane,
PCP – Angel, Angel Dust, Boat, Dummy Dust, Love Boat, Peace, Supergrass, Zombie