

Psychedelic Mushrooms, also known as magic mushrooms or “shrooms” have been in the news recently. Voters in Oregon legalized psilocybin, the active ingredient in psychedelic mushrooms, and voters in Colorado decriminalized its use. Studies are currently evaluating psilocybin’s potential for medical benefits—a measure that may provide a false sense of safety around its use, especially among teens. Ingestion of mushrooms containing psilocybin produces hallucinogenic effects, and is used as a recreational drug, typically among adolescents and young adults.

Psilocybin and other psychedelic drugs were broadly banned under the 1970 Controlled Substances Act. It is classified as a Schedule I drug, meaning it has no legally accepted medical use and has a high potential for abuse.

Psychedelic mushrooms are either fresh or dried and are typically brewed as a tea, covered in chocolate or mixed with food to help hide their bitter taste. Manufacturers also crush dried mushrooms into a powder and prepare them in capsule form. They can also be mixed with cannabis or tobacco and smoked. Mushrooms containing psilocybin are small and usually brown or tan. In the wild, people often mistake mushrooms containing psilocybin for any number of other mushrooms that are poisonous. Mushroom poisoning can cause severe illness, organ damage, and even death.

Common Side Effects

All hallucinogens carry the risk of triggering mental and emotional problems and causing accidents while under the influence. Among adolescents, magic mushrooms are frequently taken in combination with alcohol and other drugs, increasing the psychological and physical risks.

Once consumed, psilocybin’s hallucinogenic effects, or “trip,” usually begin within 30-45 minutes of ingestion and can last up to six hours. When “tripping” on psilocybin, users experience an altered sense of time and space, along with intense changes in mood and feeling. Behavior may become strange and erratic, potentially including overwhelming emotions and bouncing thoughts that cause users to become a danger to themselves. Additional possible effects of psilocybin, include: euphoria; spiritual awakening; distorted thinking, confusion and paranoia; inability to effectively speak or communicate, or talking nonsense; visual alteration and distortion, such as halos of light and vivid colors; dilated pupils; nausea and vomiting; numbness in the face; dizziness; twitching; and loss of basic motor skills.

The length and intensity of a “trip” can’t be predicted, as effects vary based on differences in mental state, past experiences, expectations for this experience, the user’s personality, their immediate environment, and the potency of the psilocybin. Also, the effects of psilocybin do not always end when the “trip” is over. Ongoing anxiety and a loss of reality may continue. Traumatic flashbacks may also occur several days, months or even years after use. Psilocybin mushroom use can trigger underlying mental health disorders, intensify current mental health conditions, and lead to psychosis.

Regardless of the law or potential medical uses, psilocybin is a powerful, dangerous hallucinogenic drug. Our youth must be made aware of these dangers and encouraged to steer clear of this drug.

For more information, please visit our website at www.drugfreeadamscounty.org.