

MAGIC MUSHROOMS

What are magic mushrooms?

Hallucinogens change the way people perceive their surroundings. They can distort all senses so that users see or hear things that do not exist. They can also interfere with thought processes and may distort the user's sense of reality, time and emotions.

The most popular hallucinogen is the synthetic drug LSD. Many other hallucinogens occur naturally such as 'magic mushrooms', datura or 'angel's trumpet', mescaline and DMT (dimethyltryptamine). Magic mushrooms contain psilocin and psilocybin. Psilocybin is converted to psilocin in the body. The effects of psilocin are very similar to those of LSD, although psilocin is about 100 times less potent than LSD.

There are approximately 20 species of mushrooms in Australia that have hallucinogenic properties. The three most commonly eaten magic mushrooms in Australia are 'gold tops', 'blue meanies', and 'liberty caps'.

Fresh or dried magic mushrooms are usually taken orally and may be eaten raw or cooked. They may be added to a variety of foods including pasta and stews or boiled into tea preparations.

The effects produced by these substances and the reaction to these effects can differ greatly among individual users, ranging from elation to terror. Hallucinogens can produce varied experiences in a person each time the substance is used, even though the same dosage is used every time.

Price of magic mushrooms

As magic mushrooms grow in the wild in certain parts of Australia they can be freely harvested. It is therefore difficult to estimate a price for hallucinogenic mushrooms.

How many people use magic mushrooms?

In Australia no information is collected specifically on the use of magic mushrooms. Magic mushrooms are classified as hallucinogens and according to the 2001 National Drug Household Survey, 8% of the Australian population reported using hallucinogens at some time, with 1% having used them in the last 12 months.

The average age at first use was 19.1 years.

The 1999 Secondary School Survey indicated that hallucinogens were one of the more popular drugs with young people attending high school across Australia. Seven percent of 12-17 year old males had ever experimented with hallucinogens with 6% of females ever reporting use.

- 15% of 17 year old males reported ever using hallucinogens
- 9% of 17 year old females reported ever using hallucinogens
- 3% of 12 year old males reported ever using hallucinogens
- 2% of 12 year old females reported ever using hallucinogens

Other names for magic mushrooms

Magic mushrooms are also known as mushies, rooms, blue meanies, golden tops and gold tops.

What are the short-term effects of magic mushrooms?

The short-term effects of using magic mushrooms may include:

- **euphoria and well-being**
- **auditory and visual hallucinations**
- **distorted sense of time, space and body image**
- **nausea and dizziness**
- **poor co-ordination**
- **increased body temperature and sweating, sometimes alternating with chills and shivering**
- **paranoia**

The main risk involved when using magic mushrooms is misidentification and the subsequent poisoning of users. Many poisonous mushrooms are very similar in appearance to hallucinogenic mushrooms and even the experts can find it difficult to distinguish one from another. Toxic mushrooms can cause nausea and diarrhoea through to coma and death.

What are the long-term effects of magic mushrooms?

Magic mushroom use is usually experimental and as a result long-term use is rare. However, the long-term effects of using magic mushrooms may include:

- **panic attacks**
- **depression and anxiety**
- **paranoid delusions**