



## **CAN YOU BECOME ADDICTED TO ECSTASY? STUDY HIGHLIGHTS PROBLEMS USERS ARE EXPERIENCING**

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Comments made by an Australian model claiming that she was 'addicted' to ecstasy appear to be supported by some ecstasy users interviewed for a national study. Of the national sample, 17% of the Australian sample had accessed a medical or health service in relation to their ecstasy and related drug use in the previous six months.

For those who saw a GP, 39% reported that the main drug involved was ecstasy and the main area of concern was depression. A counselor was the next most accessed service, where once again the main drug of concern was ecstasy (27%) and the main issue was dependence.

According to over 850 ecstasy users interviewed in the most comprehensive and detailed study of ecstasy and related drugs (ERDs) markets in Australia, users have accessed a range of health professionals in relation to their ecstasy use. Users reported receiving health help from drug and alcohol workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers.

Apart from counselors, health advice regarding perceived dependence on ecstasy was also likely to be sought from drug and alcohol workers (12%) and social workers (27%).

These are results from the 2004 PDI study. The PDI is a national study funded by the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund and conducted in the capital city of every state and territory in Australia to monitor emerging trends in ecstasy and related drug markets. The PDI monitors emerging trends in the use, price, purity and availability of ecstasy and related drugs such as speed, crystal methamphetamine, cocaine, GHB and ketamine.

Mr Paul Dillon, Information Manager at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at the University of New South Wales says that obviously many people are experiencing difficulty with their ecstasy use and looking for help.

So can you become 'addicted' to ecstasy?

"Many people continue to use ecstasy regardless of the harm that it is obviously causing them, whether they perceive the harm or not," said Mr Dillon. "In this

survey of ecstasy users half of the participants interviewed reported that they worried about their ecstasy use. Seventeen per cent wished that 'sometimes' they could stop using ecstasy and one in five (20%) found it quite difficult to stop using the drug."

"The question needs to be asked is it the drug or the lifestyle that people become dependent on?" said Mr Dillon. "Ecstasy is a fairly self-limiting drug, you use it too regularly and you simply won't get any effect – but obviously some people are finding that they are getting into difficulty with a drug, that unfortunately, many people regard as 'harmless'."

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