



# ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE IN AVIATION

## ECSTASY (MDMA)

**What is ecstasy?** Ecstasy is the street term for a number of substances that are similar to methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA).

It is classified as a stimulant with hallucinogenic properties. Although ecstasy users are seeking the MDMA effects of the drug, there is no quality control during the manufacturing process and therefore a user can never be sure what they are actually taking. Some of the tablets sold as ecstasy in Australia today do not contain MDMA at all, and are more likely to contain methamphetamine, perhaps in combination with an hallucinogenic such as ketamine (a dissociative anaesthetic used in human and veterinary surgery). They might also contain illegal chemicals such as MDA, PMA or MDEA, or substances such as caffeine or paracetamol. Some ecstasy tested has contained no active stimulant at all.

### Ecstasy and safety

Ecstasy is classified as a stimulant drug with hallucinogenic properties. A recent driving-simulator study in Germany indicated that ecstasy use impairs specific cognitive performance, has a moderate negative impact on vehicle control and a decreased sense of risk-taking.

### Long-term and short-term effects of ecstasy

The short-term effects of using ecstasy may include:

- euphoria and a feeling of wellbeing
- feelings of increased closeness with others
- increased self-confidence
- lack of inhibitions
- tongue and cheek chewing
- teeth grinding
- dry mouth
- increased body temperature
- nausea and anxiety
- sweating
- inability to sleep.

Little is known about the long-term effects of ecstasy due to the paucity of research. Many of the early results are very controversial but it is generally accepted that, particularly at high doses, some health problems will result from long-term use. Some of these may include:

- neurotoxicity
- memory and cognition problems
- depression.

Severe reactions after taking the drug have occurred and there have been a number of ecstasy-related deaths. These deaths, however, have usually been related to the circumstances of use rather than the toxicity of the drug alone.

### Aviation workplace requirements

In accordance with Civil Aviation Safety Regulation Part 99, personnel who perform, or are available to perform, safety-sensitive aviation activities are subject to random alcohol and other drug (ADO) testing. Testing may be conducted to detect the presence of ecstasy.

For testable drugs, the permitted level is a concentration of the testable drug in 100 mls of blood that is less than the confirmatory target concentration for that drug specified in Table 5.1 of the Australian Standard 4760-2006.

The aim of the testing program is preventative, not punitive. However, the regulations provide for a suitable enforcement regime to deal with personnel whose tests return confirmed readings over the permitted levels for drugs or alcohol.

## Community support services

### Alcohol and Drug Information Service

Each state and territory has an AOD information telephone service. Many operate 24 hours and offer a free-call number for people living in regional areas.

**Australian Capital Territory**  
**24 Hour Alcohol and Drug Telephone Line**  
02 6207 9977

**New South Wales**  
**Alcohol and Drug Information Service**  
02 9361 8000 or 1800 422 599 (rural)

**Northern Territory**  
**Alcohol and Drug Information Service**  
1800 131 350

**Queensland**  
**Alcohol and Drug Information Service**  
07 3236 2414 or 1800 177 833 (rural)

**South Australia**  
**Alcohol and Drug Information Service**  
1300 13 13 40

**Tasmania**  
**Alcohol and Drug Information Service**  
1800 811 994 (24 hour)

**Victoria**  
**DirectLine**  
1800 888 236

**DrugInfo**  
1300 85 85 84

**Family Drug Helpline**  
1300 660 068

**Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS Line)**  
03 9418 1020 or 1800 014 446 (rural)

**Western Australia**  
**Alcohol and Drug Information Service**  
08 9442 5000 or 1800 198 024 (rural)

**Parent Drug Information Service**  
08 9442 5050 or 1800 653 203 (rural)

### CASA contacts

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CASA has established a virtual resource centre on AOD in the Australian aviation sector, providing comprehensive policy and program advice, resources for education and training purposes, self-assessment tools, links to useful documents and services, and a range of other materials. The website can be found at [www.casa.gov.au/aod](http://www.casa.gov.au/aod).

#### CASA AOD Program Manager

The Program Manager for the CASA AOD initiative can be contacted at [aod@casa.gov.au](mailto:aod@casa.gov.au).