

# From Ecstasy



Photo by James R. Tourtellotte

Acting Commissioner of U.S. Customs Charles Winwood addresses members of the Senate Caucus for International Narcotics Control on the growing ecstasy threat.

By Capt. John Jemionek,  
Bureau of Naval Personnel,  
and JO1 Joseph Gunder,  
Naval Media Center

**T**hat's the mind-altering trip you'll probably take if you fool around with the synthetic amphetamine drug known as ecstasy. Often referred to as a "club drug" because it's sold or used at nightclubs and rave parties, ecstasy also is known by the street names "E," "X" and "XTC." It's misperceived as a "safe drug," without the side effects of other rave drugs, such as LSD, methamphetamines, heroin, or PCP.

The ecstasy drug usually comes in pill form,

about the size of an aspirin, but it's also sold as a capsule and in powder form. Immediate effects include a sense of euphoria, energy and altered sensory perception. Then, there are the side effects. Current medical literature lists mood alteration, depression and memory deficits as some of the long-term effects (lasting several months after stopping use of the drug). Acute effects include increased blood pressure, elevated body temperature, and loss of motor skills, judgment and water (from sweating).

With the increased water loss and elevated body temperature, you'll drink large amounts of water or other fluids, which can cause a salt imbalance, fainting, and a trip to an emergency room. Ecstasy abuse, coupled with strenuous

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# Agony

activity or exercise, can result in muscle deterioration (known as rhabdomyolysis), as well as kidney and liver damage.

A 1997 German medical publication cites at least 53 cases of medical complications related to ecstasy abuse, 14 of which were fatal. Similar reports are found in both U.S. and Canadian medical publications of emergency-room cases, some with fatal or near-fatal outcomes. Part of the problem is that ecstasy pills are unreliable in purity. They may contain other additives, such as caffeine, ephedrine or other amphetamine compounds, which add to the complications for an

adverse reaction.

Why risk your health and safety on a drug the Food and Drug Administration says has no medical-treatment value, especially one that's usually produced in someone's basement?

In the Navy, a lack of situational awareness can be deadly. Some over-the-counter medicines (cough medicines and painkillers) can decrease the edge military people need to walk the thin line between life and death. A drowsy hull-maintenance technician working a metal press could crush a finger or two. A boatswain's mate watching an anchor chain pay out could lose his

focus and turn the friction brake in the wrong direction, with disastrous results. If an over-the-counter medicine could lead to these kinds of



Photo by James R. Tourtellotte

U.S. Customs inspectors found these bundles of ecstasy in the false compartment of a suitcase.

This chart shows different types of markings commonly found on ecstasy pills.

Lichtbild der Vorderseite										
Bezeichnung: Rückseite:	ADAM	EVA 130mg	Amor Bruchteile	Love Herz	Herz Bruchteile	Drops Bruchteile	Sonne Bruchteile	Halbmond Bruchteile	Herzpfell Bruchteile	VW Bruchteile
Käfer Bruchteile	Mercedes	Triple Five	V.I.P.	CAL Bruchteile	PT Bruchteile	Schlitzauge Bruchteile	ANADIN	Boomerang	Bulls Bruchteile	Delphin Bruchteile
Elephant Bruchteile	Hand Bruchteile	Pigs Eingelocheranz	Pelikan Bruchteile	Taube Bruchteile	Friedens- taube	Spatz Bruchteile	Vogel	Kornel Bruchteile	Feuerstein Bruchteile	Batman
Superman	Popeye Bruchteile	Chinsee Bruchteile	Fido Bruchteile	Häuptling Bruchteile	Sonic Sonic Bruchteile	Smiley SMILE	Playboy Bruchteile	Schwalbe	Dino Bruchteile	Anker Bruchteile
Pfeil Bruchteile	Olympics	Hammer& Sichel	Garbys CCCP	Kleeblatt Kleeblatt	Kleeblatt Bruchteile	Liebesymbol Bruchteile	Yellow Sunshine	Pink Panther	Snowball	Ying Yang

situations, imagine what a mind-altering substance like ecstasy could do.

Sailors and Marines cannot afford to entrust their lives to somebody who isn't at 100-percent efficiency because of some party drug. Everyone's job is too important to be compromised by drug use. When it comes to safety, staying away from ecstasy is a no-brainer.

And, the military isn't just now catching up to the idea of its troops using ecstasy. Testing for "designer amphetamines" started in 1997. Every sample that passes military-testing laboratories gets screened for these types of drugs. Nearly 700 Sailors and Marines tested positive for ecstasy abuse in FY2001.

The Navy and Marine Corps have a "zero tolerance" policy for drug abuse, and that includes ecstasy. Drug abusers have no place in the military, and those who decide to experiment do so at their risk of detection, punishment and separation from service with a bad-conduct, dishonorable or other-than-honorable discharge.

During the past 10 years, the Naval Safety Center has recorded 27 deaths and 39 injuries related to drug abuse. For all these reasons, the increased availability of the

drug ecstasy is a concern. If you're using it, stop. If you know others who are using it, report them. It's a matter of safety—yours and your ship-mates. Don't accept the risk. For more information on ecstasy, check these websites: [navdweb.spawar.navy.mil](http://navdweb.spawar.navy.mil), [whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://whitehousedrugpolicy.gov), and [usdog.gov/dea/concern/mdma/mdmaindex.htm](http://usdog.gov/dea/concern/mdma/mdmaindex.htm).



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U.S. Customs and DEA agents bring a suspected smuggler to Miami.

The four-leaf clover form is one of many brand logos of ecstasy. These tablets were seized by U.S. Customs officials.



# Camp Pendleton Wages War on Ecstasy

By Cpl. Nathan J. Ferbert,  
13th MEU

Prosecutions for use of the drug ecstasy aboard this base could triple last year's 21 cases, said Maj. Steven B. Ockerman, OinC of the E Team, Legal Service Support Section. That's why the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) and local law-enforcement agencies are working together to eradicate the problem and raise awareness about the drug's physical dangers and legal pitfalls.

Since 1994, the NCIS has seen drug use here shift from methamphetamine to ecstasy. More than 60 investigations for suspected distribution of the drug are underway. Conviction for distribution brings a sentence of up to 15 years in confinement, said Daniel D. Simas, resident agent in charge of the local NCIS. As the number of cases has surged, so has the average volume of drugs and money recovered in each case.

Camp Pendleton is not alone in its escalating war against ecstasy. The drug is demanding increased attention from law-enforcement agencies across the country, including the Drug Enforcement Agency, said an anonymous NCIS narcotics agent.

Locally, NCIS cases include sale of the drug. Confiscated quantities range from 20 to 100 pills, sold for about \$20 each. Agents also have uncovered what they call a "loosely held" distribution organization, with one person in



Ecstasy users at raves often wear surgical masks coated with a common, over-the-counter inhalant. The inhalant is believed to heighten the sensations produced by ecstasy.

Photo courtesy of Trinka Porrata, former L.A.P.D. narcotics detective and an expert on raves and club drugs.

charge and several levels of sellers who return the money to the kingpin.

The NCIS agent said Marines often mistake ecstasy for a "safe" drug. "They're ignorant about its effects," he explained.

According to Cdr. Eric C. McDonald, 1st Marine Division surgeon, "Marines take ecstasy to alter their perception at raves, but that impairs their judgment, which is life-threatening if they think they can drive." The drug also has been linked to seizures and irregular heartbeats. In

short, it can be just as dangerous as heroin.

Another problem is that Marines don't realize they're going to get caught if they use ecstasy. "When we catch one person for distribution, we nearly always find out who the other people involved are," said Cdr. McDonald.

When Marines are convicted of using or selling ecstasy, their records are entered into the FBI's National Crime Information, which every law-enforcement agency can access. In California, convicts must register as drug offenders. Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, persons caught distributing drugs—no matter the quantity—will go to jail.

A major obstacle in stopping ecstasy and other drug crimes on Camp Pendleton is that Marines don't want to "rat" on fellow Marines. "Instead of helping others stay safe by coming forward with anonymous complaints, they tend to give little information, which makes it very difficult for us to do anything," said NCIS agent Simas. "If they suspect a guy is under the influence of a drug, they should call a military policeman. It all goes back to what they learn in boot camp: honor, courage, commitment."

One agent reminded local Marines that they're culpable if they fail to report a crime. "If you witness another Marine with drugs and don't bring it to someone's attention, you can be punished," he said. 



A common side effect of ecstasy use is involuntary clenching of the jaw. People at all-night dance parties, known as raves, often use pacifiers like these to prevent teeth grinding.

The man driving this car was taking ecstasy and drinking. It's a miracle he wasn't killed; the guardrail missed his head by less than 6 inches.

