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Shrooms. Not your Grandmother's Shiitake

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Psilocybin Mushrooms

There are more than half a million species of plants in existence. Of those, approximately 150 are believed to be hallucinogenic. Hallucinogens are drugs that have long been intertwined with humanity's history. Historically, they have been used for medicinal, religious, and ceremonial purposes. In the sixties, they were used as a form of psychiatric treatment. During the same time, recreational use of hallucinogens spread throughout the United States.

The psilocybin mushroom is one type of hallucinogenic drug used recreationally among adolescents and young adults. Commonly referred to as "magic mushrooms" or "shrooms," psilocybin mushrooms look like regular, non-hallucinogenic mushrooms. They grow throughout the continental United States, Hawaii, Mexico, and Europe. They are taken primarily to alter one's consciousness. When taken, they produce feelings of disorientation. Some common effects include a distorted sense of sight, hearing, and touch. They affect the way your brain interprets time, reality, and the environment around you, and they alter how you move, react to situations, think, hear, and see. Sometimes, this may make you think that you are hearing voices, seeing images, and feeling things that do not exist.

Why do people use mushrooms? Some people report positive and pleasurable experiences while using the drug, such as feeling a deep connection to others, to nature, or to the universe. Others report intense spiritual and religious experiences. However, not all experiences are positive. Negative experiences or "bad trips" are just as likely to occur, and may include anxiety, frightening hallucinations, a rise in past or deep-seated internal conflicts, and feelings of permanent disconnection from reality. These experiences can be quite intense and cause paranoia, panic, depression, and psychosis (a severe mental disorder characterized by derangement of personality and loss of contact with reality and causing deterioration of normal social functioning)

Long term effects: Use of psilocybin mushrooms and other hallucinogens can trigger underlying mental health disorders and long-term psychosis. They also can cause "flashbacks" or short lived recurrences of the hallucinogenic experience. People have reported flashbacks days, weeks, months, and even years later.

Mixing drugs: Using different types of drugs at the same time – or taking drugs with alcohol – is dangerous to your health. Bad trips are much more likely to occur when using alcohol or other drugs with hallucinogens. In addition, because hallucinogens alter your perception of time and reality, you may not realize how much alcohol you consumed. Too much alcohol ingested too quickly can kill you. Combining drugs can be fatal, and if you are under the influence of a hallucinogen like the psilocybin mushroom, you may not be able to perceive that you are having an overdose if one occurs.

The law: Psilocybin mushrooms are a Schedule I drug – the most strictly regulated drug classification. They are illegal to buy, sell, and possess. Possession of psilocybin mushroom is prohibited under federal law. First-time, non-violent offenders convicted of trafficking in Schedule I drugs can easily be given life-sentences.

References and Other Resources:

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MSOE Counseling Services creates monthly newsletters on mental health concerns and psychological issues. For a complete list of downloadable Counseling Services Newsletters, visit: [http://www.msoe.edu/st life/couns/newsletters.shtml](http://www.msoe.edu/st_life/couns/newsletters.shtml)

MSOE Counseling Services is located on the Second Floor of the Kern Center (K-230). To Schedule an appointment with a Counselor, call (414) 277-7590. For more information, visit Counseling Services at: [www.msoe.edu/st life/couns](http://www.msoe.edu/st_life/couns)