

# The highs and lows of drug use

*“Most are not aware these changes are linked with their recreational drug usage”*

**E**cstasy is an illegal synthetic drug – a powerful stimulant with immediate euphoriant effects. However this euphoria is typically followed by feelings of tiredness and depression during the subsequent period of nervous system recovery.

“When used regularly, ecstasy can lead to a range of problems, including memory deficits, impaired sleep, reduced problem solving ability, and reduced social intelligence,” Swinburne’s visiting Professor Andy Parrott says.

In a study conducted by Parrott,

young dance clubbers using ecstasy showed an 800 per cent acute increase in the stress hormone cortisol.

Regularly exposing the human body to these acute periods of physical stress may contribute to the longer term damaging effects of ecstasy.


“Controlled scientific trials are important in revealing these problems as changes can often be so subtle that many ecstasy users feel that the drug is relatively benign,” Parrott says.

“For instance, the body’s ability to produce a normal immune response is often compromised and oxidative stress levels are often increased which

damages body cells and contributes to disease.

“Yet most ecstasy users are not generally aware of these changes, nor of how they are linked with their recreational drug usage.”

Parrott was commenting prior to the ‘Psychobiology of MDMA or Ecstasy’ conference into the effects of ecstasy, organised last month.

Other research scheduled for the conference included a study on sleep disturbance in ecstasy users and an overview of the subtle, but wide-ranging impairments brought about by ecstasy use. 



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