Dance till you drop ... not dead!

You pop it into your mouth, crunch it between the teeth, and feel the powder ooze out. Bitter. A sharp chemical tang that spreads unpleasantly over the tongue. Twenty minutes and counting. What is its after-effect, can it harm?

A twinge? The lights shimmer strangely, just for a millisecond. Thirty minutes. Everything shifts, an overwhelming powerful charge surges through your body. Mind begins to reassure the body: ride it and go with it. Finally, the feelings of well-being rush inside you and it feels glorious, sensuous. The bass resonates through to the core, pulsing from both inside and outside your body. Everything feels so right and the rush slides into the contours of the rhythm … and after all this you live for the next time.

The use of ecstasy in hot and crowded settings can result in dehydration and overheating.

Pills sold as ecstasy may contain other substances.

Ecstasy may be associated with an increased risk of accidents if used whilst driving motor vehicles or operating dangerous machinery.

Whilst under the influence of ecstasy, individuals may expose themselves to heightened risk of unprotected sexual activity or increased risk of becoming the victim of violent or other crime.

The physical effects of ecstasy include: loss of appetite, dry mouth, increased blood pressure, increased heart rate, fluctuations in body temperature, increased respiratory rate and blood sugar level, papillary dilation, increased levels of energy and talkativeness. High doses can result in headaches, nausea, vomiting and blurred vision.

Use of ecstasy can result in dental damage, due to teeth grinding, difficulty with jaw opening, due to muscle tension.

Sudden deaths can occur.

Most fatalities are related to over-heating and exhaustion as a result of excessive dancing and the effect of ecstasy on the body’s temperature control.

Complications have been reported, including liver inflammation and bone marrow problems.

Animal studies suggest that repeated injection of MDMA lowers the level of serotonin in the brain and, to a lesser extent, dopamine. The drug also appears toxic to the nerve terminals where serotonin is produced. The issue of MDMA neurotoxiticity in humans is unresolved. It is unclear what damage is done, at what doses and what the long-term consequences are. The issue of neurotoxiticity is potentially one of the most worrying aspects of the widespread consumption of the drug and, in public health terms, probably more critical than the apparently small number of acute reactions to the substance.

Whilst under the influence of ecstasy, the individual may experience confusion, disorientation, anxiety, panic attacks, depression, paranoia and rare psychotic phenomena.

However, many users do not report negative experiences.

Ecstasy is not considered addictive within the common meaning of this term, although some users may develop chronic and compulsive patterns of use.

(EMCDDA, 1997)