

LAST WORDS ■

So what's the last word about PCP? Just this: It's a bummer drug, whether it's cut with embalming fluid or not, and whether it's turned out on the street with a brand-new tricked-up name or not.

Because no matter what it's called and how well it's packaged, phencyclidine *is* still just phencyclidine. PCP is, was, and always will be PCP.

And that means it's always going to be causing problems for somebody somewhere.

Don't let one of those somebodies be you.

Because when you consider all the rip-offs and freak-outs and bummers and deaths that have gone around and come down throughout this drug's history, you *could* come to the conclusion that PCP dealers were right all along: They really *do* have to be pretty creative to sell PCP.

Because nobody *ever* wants what it really is. ■



Another one bites the dust. PCP can kill—or lead to the kind of actions that can get you killed.



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DIRTY DEALING ■

It's hard to keep a bad drug down. Because no sooner has word gotten out about the last dangerous, crazy, or rip-off drug than someone's scraped the crud off the soles of their shoes, wrapped it in plastic and foil, and pawned it off as the latest thing in chemical high cuisine.

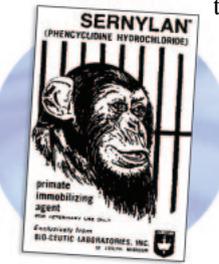
And by the time people have all gotten the word about green shoe scrapings (or *whatever*), a brand-new drug turns up or a forgotten old one returns and a new Drug Abuse Phenomenon is born.

Take PCP, for example.

Over the years, it's made more names for itself on the street, more often probably, than any other drug.

PCP scams are legendary, too, including switches for nearly every substance that's ever been dropped, shot, or snorted in the name of chemical consciousness and artificial good times.

Monkey business. PCP was adapted for animal use when side effects on humans became clear.



Also legendary is PCP's reputation as a bummer drug, one that can shake up even

experienced users.

Since PCP is so high in bummer potential and since it gets shuffled around under so many names (from "angel dust" to "zoot"), you might think that dealers think they have something to hide when it comes to this drug.

And you might be right.

EARLY YEARS ■

The name PCP comes from the drug's chemical name *1-(1-phenycyclohexyl) piperidine*. It was developed in 1926 as a surgical anesthetic and became known as *phencyclidine*.

Its developers hoped it would prove safe and effective, but early researchers decided it wasn't much of either and put it back on the shelf until 1957.

That's when pharmaceutical researchers dusted

If PCP was a party, it would be a masquerade a lot more often than it would be a come-as-you-are.



it off, named it Sernyl®, and began running tests on it again.

And PCP *did* look promising for a while. In fact, the drug carried only one serious drawback: After surgery, patients went a little crazy, with jumbled speech, delirium, and hallucinations.

The drawbacks proved serious enough that, in 1965, its manufacturer removed Sernyl from testing.

If you're wondering what a drug company does with a discredited drug, sometimes they do the same thing that dealers do on the street: Rename it, repackage it, and re-release it. And in the case of Sernyl, the "new" product was dubbed Sernylan®, and it was quickly marketed as a veterinary anesthetic.

That same year, in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, a new tablet dubbed the "PeaCe Pill" appeared.

Hailed, as most new drugs are, as the best thing yet, the PeaCe Pill failed spectacularly at living up to its name.

And in a wave of bad press (and bad user reactions), PCP disappeared into the oblivion it so richly deserved.

THE BIG SWITCH ■

But in the early 1970's, the drug reemerged, this time as a liquid or a crystalline powder and in tablets. But the word was out on PCP and experienced users stayed away in droves—again.

Almost unable to give phencyclidine away under its own name, traffickers decided that PCP is the stuff that dreams (or, at least, big bucks) are made of.

The result? PCP became the basic commodity in innumerable street drug swindles.



And it *has* been in a lot of them, in batches of marijuana, heroin, LSD, and even non-psychoactive filler.

On the street, it's made the rounds under a long list of names, from "angel dust" and "hog" to "tic" and "space base," when mixed with crack. Possibilities seem limited only by a dealer's imagination, or deviousness.

If you're thinking that means they're almost infinite, you'd be pretty close to the truth. And you'd probably find that conclusion confirmed in PCP's latest (and current) incarnation on U.S. streets.

This time, it's being teamed with formaldehyde (an ingredient in embalming fluid) and other industrial chemicals, and sprinkled onto ordinary cigarettes or marijuana joints.

When smoked, the PCP-formaldehyde mix triggers a high that comes on fast, hits hard, and doesn't take many prisoners—or earn many real fans.

Still, it *will* mess you up. And that's all that's really necessary for a drug to find a following, somewhere, especially among lower-rung street users.

And there's been enough of *them* lately to make the combination increasingly visible and PCP-related problems increasingly evident.

Street names for the new single-serve approach to PCP marketing include such esoteric labels as "amp," "dank," "wet," and "fry sticks."

▶ NAME GAME



AKA PCP. Tracking all of the things that PCP has been called over the years is impossible. But even a short list of some of its names shows how slippery PCP is to nail down.



INSIDE STORY ■

Regardless of how it's packaged and sold, a more complex story involves what PCP does in the body and mind, once it goes to work. Because no matter how it's used, PCP produces a tangle of powerful drug effects—acting as an anesthetic, stimulant, depressant, and hallucinogen, at the same time.

Often misclassified as a hallucinogen, PCP really *is* in a class of its own. Medically it's often described as a *deliriant* or a *dissociative anesthetic* (which means it causes psychological detachment and blocks pain).

Whatever it's called, the most distinctive feature of PCP is the unpredictability and sheer *weirdness* of its effects. And those vary with dosage:

▶ **Low doses** (3-8 mg) cause mild intoxication. Users show impaired coordination, slurred speech, and erratic eye movement.

▶ **Bigger doses** (8 to 12 mg) pump the low-dose effects up higher, and add increased heart rate and blood pressure, fever, sweating, nausea, a blank stare, and a shuffling, disjointed gait that some users call "zombie walking."

▶ **Higher doses** can unleash a range of serious problems, from a sharp drop in blood pressure to muscular rigidity, convulsions, even coma and death. And while lower-dose effects may only last a few hours, higher-dose effects can continue for several days.

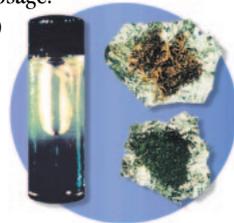
The difference between low- and high-dose effects points up a real danger for users.

Because low-dose effects are like those produced by marijuana, users can smoke more to sustain the high. But the resemblance to pot can end with a few more dusted joints, as a full-blown PCP trip kicks in.

And *that* can lead to a full-blown PCP *bummer*.

Bad PCP trips are unpredictable and often frightening. They can involve rapid, uncontrollable shifts in mood combined with bizarre delusions and hallucinations. Violent, aggressive outbursts are also common.

Unfortunately, there aren't many ways to ease a PCP *bummer* outside a medical facility. Time-honored LSD



Unsung zero. Liquid PCP can be sprayed on everything smokable from parsley to tobacco.



The PCP-formaldehyde mix triggers a high that comes on fast, hits hard, and wins few real fans. Still, it will mess you up, and that's all that's really necessary for a drug to find a following, somewhere.



talk-down techniques are often useless: PCP users can be so detached they don't "hear" support, and so paranoid they may not accept it anyway.

That's why the best advice to follow in an emergency is to get help *fast*.

PCP PROBLEMS ■

Researchers could fill volumes, listing the long-term effects of PCP. But one of the most critical points is simple: The body stores PCP in muscle and fat at full psychoactive potential, which can mean all sorts of problems for users, even after they stop using.

Since regular use causes *tolerance*, which means that increasingly large doses are needed to achieve desired effects, that can also mean a lot of potential problems, waiting on down the road.



Higher doses, in turn, increase the risk of overdose. And since PCP acts as a depressant—slowing both breathing and heart beat—the risk of overdose is compounded by use of alcohol or other downers.

For many users, a more immediate danger involves the drug's "behavioral toxicity," which is a fancy way of labelling the dumb, dangerous things that people do when they're wasted. Car crashes and drownings rank high on the list of PCP-related accidents and account for a large share of user deaths.

A final group of risks includes flashbacks and long-term emotional problems.

Unlike LSD flashbacks, which are psychological in origin, PCP aftershocks are physically-based and involve actual drug effects. Post-high bummers brought on by drugs, stress, or fatigue have been known to occur weeks or months after last use.

■ DUSTING OFF: HOW TO GET OFF PCP

Need help—or know someone who does—in coming back from PCP? Good. Because the fact is that PCP *can* trigger a range of problems, and users can choose from a range of solutions to bring themselves back from a PCP binge or habit. And the sooner, the better.

Here are some key areas to focus on:

■ **Exercise.** Regular exercise can work wonders in defusing the tension and depression that can follow in PCP's wake. Jogging, especially, is great for reducing anxiety and panic. Plus, exercise increases body metabolism, which can speed the elimination of PCP breakdown products from the body.

■ **Diet.** A few small changes here can make a big difference in the way you think and feel. Go heavy on the complex carbohydrates, lighten up on junk; skip caffeine and simple sugars; and drink lots of water (at least 8 glasses a day).

■ **R & R.** (Rest and relaxation, not rock & roll—unless they're the same thing to you.) Take it easy for a while. Realize that you've been through a tough time, and give yourself space to adjust and get your life back into an even flow. Make up your mind about who you intend to be from here on out, then get busy making it happen.

It may not be fast or easy, but we *guarantee* that it's a lot more fun than the alternative. ■



Future factors. Need a good reason to get straight? Think about it, and maybe one will come to you.