

fast facts

acid LSD

■ **Overview:** LSD (*lysergic acid diethylamide*) is a drug that triggers massive changes in thought and perception. Discovered in 1943, its effects were so distinctive that a new word, *psychedelic* (“mind-manifesting”), was coined by researchers to classify the changes it unleashed. Widely used in the '60s, LSD began a comeback in the 1990's, helped along by lighter dosage and new-look packaging. Still, it can cause the same old problems for unprepared, uninformed, and sometimes even experienced users.



■ **Nicknames:** *acid, blotter, dose, windowpane.*

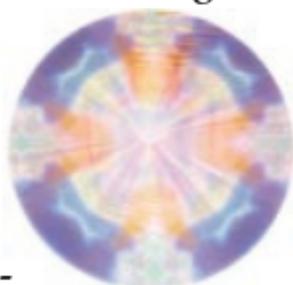
■ **Appearance:** LSD is an odorless, colorless liquid and individual doses are often dripped onto sheets of blotter paper preprinted with mystical or alternative-culture icons, like Beavis and Butt-head (shown above).

■ **Actions/Effects:** LSD alters the action of the neurotransmitters *serotonin*, *norepinephrine*, and *dopamine*, triggering extreme changes in brain function. Physical effects include increased body temperature, heart rate, and blood pressure. Psychological effects include perceptual and thought distortions, hallucinations, delusions, and rapid mood swings.



■ **Medical Uses:** None. Although LSD has been tried as a treatment for various forms of mental illness, the only currently-approved research involving the drug is aimed at testing its potential value as a treatment for drug dependence.

■ **Risks/Side Effects:** The main risk linked to LSD is anxiety—effects are so disorienting and so unavoidable that users sometimes panic. The drug may also “unmask” psychological problems, since it involves such a stark confrontation with the self that hidden conflicts can be exposed and potential problems activated.



■ **Trends:** LSD use soared during the 1990's, as dosage strength dropped. Lighter dosage also meant a set of less intense, more easily managed effects, resulting in fewer adverse reactions than were common during LSD's first trip around the recreational drug circuit a generation ago.

■ **Demographics:** Following the upsurge in use a decade ago, LSD use has fallen since, in large part due to decreased availability of the drug resulting from federal disruption of supply networks. In a national survey of the high school class of 2010, 2.6 percent reported use in the previous year, down from 6.6 percent in 2000. Similar declines are also noted in other national reports of use patterns and hospital emergency-room admissions.



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