

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT LSD...

A college fad . . . dangerous drug . . . a new tool for treatment of mental disorders—

LSD has been called all these. Investigators are trying to find out more about this mysterious substance. Here are some questions and answers on what has been learned so far.



—Bimrose in "Portland Oregonian"
"Pandora's Pillbox"

LSD, taken in a sugar cube, causes "instant insanity," says a medical expert

—USN&WR Photo



What, actually, is LSD?

LSD, or lysergic acid diethylamide, is derived from a fungus substance growing on plants, particularly rye. It is prepared for consumption in the form of tablets or ampoules, or as a liquid. It is colorless, odorless, tasteless. As a liquid, it is normally consumed in cubes of sugar which have been saturated with the drug.

Is LSD habit-forming?

Most authorities agree that it is not, in the sense that a user does not become physically dependent upon it, or have withdrawal symptoms when it is not available. However, many users take it repeatedly because they say they enjoy the sensations it produces.

Tens of thousands of doses of LSD have been administered under medical supervision without indications that it is addicting. Also, there is no evidence that LSD is a "steppingstone" to such addictive drugs as morphine and heroin. Taken more than once a week, it does not produce the psychic effect that is sought.

How does LSD work on the brain?

It causes "instant insanity," according to one authority. For up to eight hours after swallowing a dose of LSD, the user literally goes out of his mind. Time and space are distorted. Colors appear brighter than normal. Moods range from anxiety and panic to ecstasy.

There is uniform agreement among investigators of the drug that LSD can be extremely dangerous when used without medical supervision. On record are cases of suicide, assault, sexual promiscuity and severe mental damage when LSD was used without competent supervision.

Mental upsets caused by the use of LSD are termed a "bad trip." In April, 1965, the admission rate for "LSD derangements" at Bellevue Hospital in New York City was seven a month. By May of this year, it had increased to 14 a month.

Who uses LSD?

Statistics are hard to obtain, but estimates of authorities are that from 100,000 to 1 million Americans have "taken a trip" on LSD. The typical user is said to be a college student or graduate student, usually a member of the middle-income group. These people, unlike narcotic users, are said not to be seeking a "release from reality," but an "expansion of their minds."

Where did LSD come from?

In 1938, a Swiss scientist, Dr. Albert Hofmann, discovered it by accident while looking for a drug to tone

up the nervous system. Five years later, he inhaled some LSD fumes as he was experimenting with it and, as he wrote, had "fantastic visions of extraordinary vividness accompanied by a kaleidoscopic display of intense coloration."

When was LSD introduced into the United States?

Beginning in 1949, and continuing for about 10 years, LSD was known in the U. S. only as an experimental drug. Its use was confined to hospitals and laboratories by psychiatrists and psychologists seeking new treatments for mental diseases. Authorities believe that it someday may prove to be a useful tool for investigation of brain function. It already has been found encouraging in the treatment of victims of alcoholism.

How did LSD get out of the laboratories and hospitals and into general distribution?

A small group of teachers at Harvard University's Center for Research and Personality took up LSD and made it available to "interested" students.

This group, headed by Dr. Timothy Leary—since dismissed by Harvard and later indicted on a charge of illegal possession of marijuana—publicized its experiences in interviews and articles in general-circulation magazines from 1960 on. Now, legitimate purchase of LSD is limited to U. S. Government agencies.

Is LSD easy to make?

Dr. Jerome Levine, of the psychopharmacology department of the National Institute of Mental Health, puts it this way: Any chemistry student in college, with access to good laboratory facilities and to lysergic acid, which he can get from Italy, Czechoslovakia or Mexico, could make a supply of LSD in about four hours.

LSD sells for \$10,000 a kilo—2.2 pounds—in Italy. There are 1 billion micrograms in a kilo. The average dose is 100 micrograms, diluted in distilled water and soaked into a sugar cube. Some confirmed users demand doses of 200 to 300 micrograms. The going price for a dose is about \$5, but reportedly it can be obtained for as little as 75 cents.

Is LSD dangerous?

Dr. Stanley F. Yolles, director of the National Institute of Mental Health, says this: "We have no idea how threatening it is—how dangerous it is to any one individual. We know there are certain individuals who have panic reaction, who become psychotic. . . . If even one individual has that reaction, it is a dangerous drug."

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