

Peyote/Mescaline

Profile

Peyote (*Lophophora williamsii* or *Lophophora diffusa*) is a spineless cactus with small protrusions called “buttons” that are used for psychoactive hallucinogenic purposes. Mescaline, an amphetamine, is the principal active psychedelic compound in peyote. It is a hallucinogen derived from several different active cacti – the Peyote cactus that grows in the southwestern United States and Mexico, the San Pedro cactus (*Trichocereus pachanoi*) found in Peru,¹ or the Peruvian Torch cactus (*Trichocereus peruvianus*). The limited growing area of this cactus restricts drug supply severely, so it is a common practice to sell other drugs such as PCP or LSD as mescaline.² Mescaline can also be produced in a laboratory by chemical synthesis.³ A white crystalline material, mescaline sulfate, is the pure form of mescaline and can be put in capsule form.⁴ Peyote and mescaline are listed as Schedule I hallucinogens under the Controlled Substances Act in the United States.⁵ In a rare exception, “the nondrug use of peyote in bona fide religious ceremonies of the Native American Church, and by members of the Native American Church” is legal.⁶

History

Peyote is one of the oldest psychedelic agents known. Aztecs of Pre-Columbian Mexico who considered the cactus magical and divine often used it.⁷ Peyote use then spread from Mexico to North America to other Native American groups, who used it to treat illnesses, communicate with spirits, and for highly religious ceremonies.⁸ In 1918, the Native American Church was formed to preserve their right to use peyote.

Mescaline has been used for centuries because of the mystical experiences that it is purported to induce.⁹ Until the landmark free exercise decision handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Employment Division v. Smith* 494 U.S. 872 (1990), members of the Native American Church had the legal right to use mescaline-containing peyote in religious ceremonies.¹⁰

Ernst Spath first synthesized peyote in 1919.¹¹

Methods of Use

Peyote

The peyote cactus contains buttons that can be cut from the root and dried. The buttons can either be chewed or soaked in water to produce an ingestible liquid.¹² Peyote buttons may also be ground into a powder and then “smoked with a leaf material, such as cannabis or tobacco.”¹³

Mescaline

Mescaline is administered orally in the form of powder, a tablet, a capsule, or liquid. In its pure liquid form, mescaline can be ingested; however, this method is unpopular. Users typically consume between 300-500 mg (which is approximately the amount contained in 3-6 peyote buttons.) Effects generally appear within 1-2 hours, and gradually disappear 10-12 hours after administration.¹⁴

Pharmacology

Mescaline belongs to a family of compounds known as phenethylamines, making it quite distinct from the other major psychedelics, such as LSD and psilocybin, which belong to the indole family. Many synthetic “designer” psychedelics, such as ecstasy (MDMA) and 2C-B, are phenethylamines, and are related to the chemistry of mescaline.¹⁵ The chemical structure of mescaline is very similar to that of the neurotransmitters dopamine and norepinephrine, thus the drug can interfere with their actions in the brain.¹⁶

Effects

Mescaline produces perceptual, cognitive, and emotional experiences that vary widely among users based on size, setting, expectations, personality, and drug history. The only documented long-term effect of mescaline is a possible prolonged psychotic state similar to that of paranoid schizophrenia. It is suggested that this may only affect those who were previously diagnosed as mentally ill.

Physical Effects

- Numbness, tension, anxiety, rapid reflexes, muscle twitches and weakness, impaired motor coordination, dizziness, trembling, dilation of the pupils
- Increased blood pressure and heart rate
- Intense nausea and violence
- Appetite suppression
- Elevated body temperature and sweating
- Chills and sweating

Psychological Effects

- Vivid mental images and distorted vision
- Synesthesia: perception of seeing music or hearing colors
- Altered space and time perception
- Joy, exhilaration, panic, extreme anxiety, or terror
- Distorted sense of body (users can feel either weighed down or weightless)
- Heightened sensory experience (i.e. brighter colors, sharper visual definition, increased hearing acuity, more distinguished taste)
- Difficulty focusing, maintaining attention, concentrating, and thinking
- Loss of sense of reality; melding past experiences with present
- Preoccupation with trivial thoughts, experiences, or objects

- Highly adverse reactions (“bad trip”), including frightening hallucinations, confusion, disorientation, paranoia, agitation, depression, panic, and/or terror

Addiction and Tolerance¹⁷

Tolerance to peyote or mescaline typically develops rapidly with repeated daily use, generally within 3-6 days. Cross-tolerance may also occur with other drugs, including LSD and psilocybin. With a period of abstinence of at least a few days, “desired sensitivity is restored.” Currently, no physical dependence or psychological dependence has been reported, although it may be possible.

Terminology¹⁸

- Slang Terms for Peyote:
 - Bad seed, britton, hikori, hikuli, half moon, hyatari, P, nubs, seni, tops
- Slang Terms for Mescaline:
 - Cactus, cactus buttons, cactus joint, mesc, mescal, mese, mezc, moon, topi
- Use and Users
 - Cactus head – peyote user
 - Love trip – mescaline and MDMA or MDA

Links

- [DEA: Peyote and Mescaline](#)
- [In The Know Zone: What is Mescaline/Peyote?](#)

¹ Brands, B., Sproule, B., Marshman, J. (1998). Mescaline. *Drugs & Drug Abuse* (3rd edition). pps. 351-357. Addiction Research Foundation: Toronto, Ontario: Canada.

² Brands, et al. (1998).

³ Peyote (*Lophophora Williamsii*). Retrieved October 30, 2006, from <http://www.mescaline.com/peyote.html>.

⁴ Brands, et al. (1998).

⁵ US Drug Enforcement Administration. Controlled Substances Act. Retrieved October 30, 2006, from <http://www.dea.gov/pubs/csa.html>.

⁶ The Legal Root. State by State Comparison of Peyote Statutes. Retrieved October 30, 2006, from <http://www.peyote.net/archive/law.htm>.

⁷ Carson-DeWitt, Rosalyn. (2001). Mescaline. *Encyclopedia of Drugs, Alcohol, & Addictive Behavior*: (2nd edition). pps. 714-715. Macmillan Reference USA: Durham, North Carolina.

⁸ Carson-DeWitt, Rosalyn. (2001).

⁹ Brands, et al. (1998).

¹⁰ Oyez – US Supreme Court Multimedia. *Employment Division v. Smith*: 494 U.S. 872. (1990). Retrieved on October 30, 2006, from <http://www.oyez.org/oyez/resource/case/110/>.

¹¹ The Vaults of Erowid. History of Mescaline. Retrieved on October 30, 2006, from <http://www.a1b2c3.com/drugs/mes02.htm>.

¹² US Drug Enforcement Administration.

¹³ Brands, et al. (1998).

¹⁴ Brands, et al. (1998).

¹⁵ Turner, D.M. Mescaline: Peyote and San Pedro Cactus – Shamanic Sacraments. Retrieved October 30, 2006, from <http://www.lavondyss.com/donut/guide/mescaline.html>.

¹⁶ In The Know Zone. What is Peyote/Mescaline? Retrieved October 30, 2006, from http://www.intheknowzone.com/halluc/what_mescaline.htm.

¹⁷ Brands, et al. (1998).

¹⁸ Indiana Prevention Resource Center. Street Drug Slang Dictionary. Retrieved October 30, 2006, from <http://www.drugs.indiana.edu/slang/SearchSlang.aspx>.