

Magic mushrooms

What are magic mushrooms?

Magic mushrooms are classified as hallucinogens, which change the way people perceive their surroundings. They can distort all senses so that users see or hear things that do not exist. They can also interfere with thought processes and may distort the user's sense of reality, time and emotions.

The active chemicals found in magic mushrooms are psilocin and psilocybin. Psilocybin is converted to psilocin in the body. The effects of psilocin are very similar to those of LSD, although psilocin is about 100 times less potent than LSD.

There are at least 30 species of mushrooms in Australia that have hallucinogenic properties. The three most commonly eaten magic mushrooms in Australia are 'gold caps/tops', 'blue meanies', and 'liberty caps'.

Fresh or dried magic mushrooms are usually taken orally and may be eaten raw or cooked. They may be added to a variety of foods including pasta and stews, or boiled into tea preparations. The effects produced by these substances and the reaction to these effects can differ greatly among individual users, ranging from elation to terror. Hallucinogens can produce varied experiences in a person each time the substance is used, even though the same dosage is used every time.

Magic mushrooms are also known as mushies, shrooms, blue meanies, golden tops, gold tops, caps and boomers.



How many people use magic mushrooms?

In Australia no information is collected specifically on the use of magic mushrooms. Magic mushrooms are classified as hallucinogens and according to the [2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey](#), 9.4% of the Australian population (aged 14 and over) reported using hallucinogens at some time, with just over 1% having used them in the past 12 months.

The average age at first use was 18.5 years.

The [Australian secondary school students' use of tobacco, alcohol, and over-the-counter and illicit substances in 2011](#) indicated that the use of hallucinogens was uncommon with young people attending high school across Australia. Just under four percent of 12-17 year old males and 2.5% of females had ever experimented with hallucinogens.

What are the effects?

The short-term effects of using magic mushrooms may include:

- euphoria and well-being
- auditory and visual hallucinations
- distorted sense of time, space and body image
- nausea and dizziness
- poor co-ordination
- increased body temperature and sweating, sometimes alternating with chills and shivering
- paranoia and anxiety

Many poisonous mushrooms are very similar in appearance to hallucinogenic mushrooms and even the experts can find it difficult to distinguish one from another. Toxic mushrooms can cause nausea and diarrhoea through to coma and death.

What are the risks?

The main risk involved when using magic mushrooms is misidentification and the subsequent poisoning of users.

Given that these substances both distort reality and alter consciousness, one of the many long-term risks associated with using naturally occurring hallucinogens is a change in personality and/or patterns of thinking.

Other rarer effects include flashbacks (brief, but intrusive hallucinogen-like experiences that occur after the effects of the hallucinogen have worn off), hallucinogen persisting perception disorder (HPPD), impaired memory, prolonged depression and anxiety.

