

Detecting misuse of hallucinogens

NEWSLETTER

September 2022



More accidents due to rising consumption of hallucinogens

The consumption of hallucinogens is rising sharply across Europe. Both the number of seizures and the quantities seized are on the increase. In the past 12 months, around 20% of drug users have taken LSD and 13% have taken ketamine. This increases the risk of people driving under the influence of hallucinogens.

When drug users take hallucinogens, it seems to them as though the world dissolves into a series of kaleidoscopic images. They hear colours, see sounds and are no longer able to perceive their environment accurately. They are unable to concentrate or pay attention, their response times are slowed and their ability to make sound judgements evaporates. In some cases, users no longer perceive themselves as separate beings and feel as though they have merged into their surroundings.

Many users know that they are hallucinating and remain incredibly communicative but are no longer able to cope with reality. Anyone driving in this state is a danger to themselves and to others. The effects are usually long-lasting—often persisting for over 12 hours in the case of LSD. An additional risk is presented by unpredictable flashbacks—where users suddenly re-experience the effects of the drug for weeks or months after consumption. Some traffic experts recommend not driving a car for up to three months after taking hallucinogens.

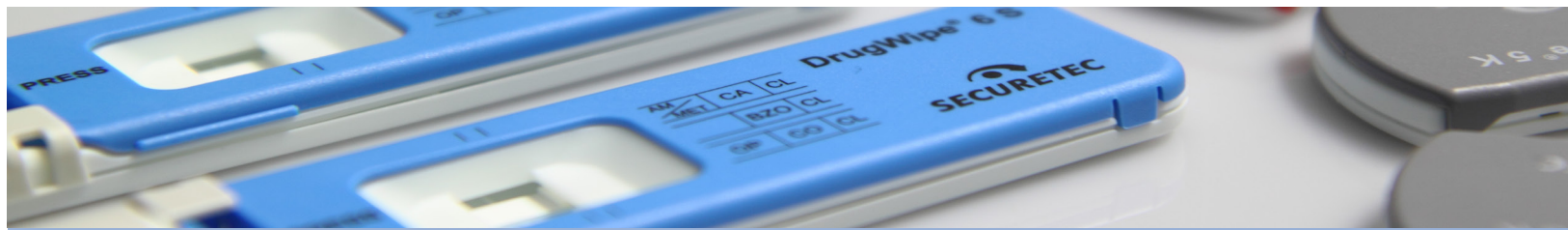
The seizures recorded by the European Monitoring Centre for drugs and Drug addiction (EMCDDA) indicate that consumption is growing in Europe—in terms of both frequency and quantities. The Netherlands is seeing an increase in ketamine use on the nightclub scene, while there are reports of large seizures of LSD in some

What are hallucinogens?

Hallucinogens are a group of drugs that have a particularly strong effect on the mind. They alter a person's perception of reality—of sounds, colours and shapes. Physical dependency is unlikely but persistent psychosis can occur after just one use. "Flashbacks", in which users re-experience the effect of the drug even months after taking it, are particularly unpredictable.

Hallucinogenic substances are divided into two different types: The first includes substances such as LSD, psilocybin, psilocin and mescaline, which are also naturally occurring. Other hallucinogenic plants include angel's trumpet (*Brugmansia*) and hydrangeas that are commonly grown in front gardens, as well as nutmeg.

The second type of hallucinogen consists of synthetic substances like ketamine. Many of these are anaesthetic drugs that produce hallucinations at low doses but will only have an anaesthetic effect at higher doses.



Conspicuous signs of hallucinogen misuse

Some of the main signs of taking hallucinogens:

Physical symptoms

- Dilated pupils
- Shivering, goosebumps
- Motor disturbances, impaired vision
- Sweating
- Difficulty speaking
- Elevated pulse, blood pressure, body temperature
- Uncontrollable laughter

Behavioural effects

- Partial or total loss of concentration
- Confusion, disorientation
- Hallucinations

- Panic, paranoia
- Aggression
- Impaired perception of reality

Other signs

- Small colourful squares of printed paper, usually for tearing off
- Small colourful tablets in various shapes
- Small unidentified objects in special packaging (“purple pyramids”)

all of which may be scattered around the car or stored in a purse or wallet.

For reliable identification of irregularities, instruction and practical training are recommended, for instance as offered by Securetec.

Scandinavian countries. In addition, both France and the Netherlands are experiencing a growth in the consumption of laughing gas (dinitrogen monoxide). Laughing gas is readily available, even for minors. Control of this substance presents a challenge for authorities, as it is permitted for commercial purposes, such as the inflation of balloons or in the chargers of whipped cream dispensers. 19 countries have reported seizures of a total of 158 kilos of hallucinogenic mushrooms. Young adults (aged 15 to 34) are particularly likely to experiment with these substances. All these indications have prompted the

EMCDDA to call for improved monitoring, as the situation in Europe is very heterogeneous and hallucinogens are not recorded consistently.

Growing consumption also always means an increase in the number of people who can no longer assess dangerous situations realistically and may, for example, choose to drive home while under the influence of a hallucinogenic drug. Intensive awareness-raising and appropriate screening serve to combat this risk. There is as yet no rapid saliva screening test for LSD but this type of test is ideal for detecting other hallucinogens.



The DrugWipe® 6 S rapid screening test reliably detects ketamine consumption in saliva—just ask, we’re always happy to help.

References: European Drug Report 2022, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), Lisbon — Deutsche Hauptstelle für Suchtfragen e.V. (German Centre for Addiction Issues), Hamm, www.dhs.de — Bundesanstalt für Straßenwesen (German Federal Highway Research Institute), www.bast.de, Bergisch Gladbach

Securetec Detektions-Systeme AG

Lilienthalstrasse 7
85579 Neubiberg
Germany

T +49 89 203080-1651; F +49 89 203080-1652
info@securetec.net • www.securetec.net

© 2022 Securetec Detektions-Systeme AG
70570-EN-v01-2022-10-04

Images provided by: Securetec AG; AdobeStock_395979454_koyash07

The DrugWipe saliva test
on YouTube:



[@DrugWipeGlobal](https://twitter.com/DrugWipeGlobal)

we detect to protect