

Risk communication about high-dose MDMA

Impact of a hypothetical drug alert on future MDMA use

3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) is a drug that produces euphoric, prosocial and energising effects. While most people who use it do not experience serious harms, MDMA toxicity can result in significant clinical presentations, and in some cases, death. MDMA dose is an important modifiable risk factor. In the context of increased access to higher-dose tablets in recent years, high-dose MDMA alerts have been distributed in Australia, but little is known about how people respond to them.

What did we do?

- We conducted an anonymous online survey of Australians who used MDMA pills or capsules in the last year.
- Respondents were randomised into alert or control conditions, with the former receiving a high-dose MDMA alert with systematically varied descriptions of dose, effects and actions to reduce harm.
- Multinomial logistic regressions determined the association between receipt of drug alert (and varying alert content) and hypothetical MDMA dosing.

What did we find?

- People exposed to a hypothetical drug alert about high-dose MDMA were more likely to report an intention to avoid using the drug compared with those informed about potentially possessing high-dose MDMA without an alert.
- Altering information on dose, effects and harm-reduction strategies did not significantly change responses.
- These findings remained the same when the analysis controlled for potential confounders, including age, gender and the number of lifetime MDMA use occasions.

What do these findings mean?

- People who use MDMA responded positively to a hypothetical high-dose MDMA alert by reporting avoiding use or reducing their initial dose.
- This population demonstrated a willingness to change dosing behaviours in light of new information about what was in their drugs, which is relevant to other similar initiatives, like drug checking (pill testing).
- Testing actual behaviours following alert exposure in partnership with people who use drugs is an important next step.

Where can I find out more?

Read the full paper [here](#).

Citation

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