

Psychedelics: Mushroom Edibles

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the landscape of psychedelics is rapidly evolving. Psilocybin is the psychedelic substance found in “magic mushrooms.” Psilocybin is currently illegal on the federal level under the Controlled Substances Act. However, some states and cities have decriminalized magic mushrooms, giving the misperception that these drugs are now safe to use recreationally. Magic mushrooms have hallucinogenic effects when eaten, which can lead to nausea, headache, visual distortions, hallucinations, and rapid heart rate. Some of the confusion on the safety of using mushrooms comes from recent clinical studies that are being conducted on the efficacy and safety in treating some types of mental health conditions with psilocybin. While there have been controlled trials that show some promising findings, researchers in the medical field note that there is a distinct difference in taking psilocybin in a clinical setting under medical supervision and taking the drug recreationally, or as a means to self-medicate. While research is being done on the effects of psilocybin on the adult brain, scientists emphasize that there is little known about how psilocybin affects the brain development of adolescents and young adults.

In a study conducted by the University of Virginia School of Medicine, researchers explored increased calls to U.S. poison centers by adolescents and young adults using psilocybin. The findings showed that psilocybin-related calls tripled over the past decade among teens between the ages of 13-19, with approximately 75% of callers in this age group needing medical attention (Journal of Adolescent Health). The most common reasons for calls were hallucinations or delusions, agitation, abnormally fast heart rate and confusion. With an increasing number of adolescents and young adults experimenting with psilocybin, it is important for adults to understand the impact and risks of magic mushrooms. This can include impairment in judgement, perception and behavior and can lead to accidents, self-harm, and suicide (Psychology Today).

As this ongoing research is being conducted, other products containing mushrooms are emerging on the market and being promoted as containing legal ingredients that still offer a hallucinogenic effect. There is a growing market for gummies, chocolates, and other products that contain mushrooms or mushroom extracts. These products are popping up in smoke shops, gas stations and the online marketplace (including Amazon). Many of these products claim to boost mental clarity, creativity, and focus, while others offer users sensations from light euphoria to more intense psychedelic experiences. These products may be especially alluring to teens due to accessibility and lack of awareness of potential risks.

Some of the brands being sold are made from *amanita muscaria*, a mushroom that contains the psychoactive but legal compounds muscimol and ibotenic acid. Muscimol is a compound that can alter mood, perception, and behavior. Other products are advertised as nootropic mushroom blends that use non-psychoactive mushrooms like reishi, lion’s mane and chaga, while at the same time advertising their products will result in psychedelic experiences. For example, one brand sold on Amazon, Shrumfuzed Edibles, markets their products as the “ultimate trip without cannabinoids or psilocybin.”



Public health experts warn that inaccurate package labeling is a concern in the mushroom edible market as the products may contain undisclosed and potentially harmful ingredients (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Unfortunately, these products are not approved nor regulated by the FDA, making their contents and safety questionable.

The physical effects of mushrooms can include:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Increased heart rate, blood pressure, and temperature
- Muscle weakness and twitches
- Dizziness
- Drowsiness and yawning
- Lack of coordination
- Dilated pupils

Behavior effects can include:

- Paranoia
- Extreme anxiety
- Inability to effectively speak or communicate
- Loss of basic motor skills including walking
- Impaired concentration
- Confusion
- Extreme emotions

As the drug landscape continues to shift, it is important for parents and caregivers to stay informed as a means to engage in preventative conversations with youth. Asking youth what they know about psilocybin and other mushroom products is a great way to get the conversation started. As caring adults, we can play a role in providing youth with factual information about the potential risks and consequences of psychedelics like mushrooms, promote healthy coping skills and encourage access to treatment and support for those struggling with substance abuse.

References: American Psychological Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Journal of Adolescent Health; National Institute on Drug Abuse; Psychology Today