

Magic mushrooms

Liberties, magics, mushies, liberty cap, Psilocybe semilanceata, psilocybin, shrooms, Amanita muscaria, fly agaric

What are magic mushrooms?

These are hallucinogenic mushrooms that grow wild in many parts of the world and the UK in autumn. The main type used is the liberty cap (*Psilocybe semilanceata*) but fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) is also sometimes used.



The liberty cap (*Psilocybe semilanceata*)

Magic mushrooms (except Fly Agaric) are usually eaten raw but are also dried out and stored for later use. They can also be cooked into food or made into a tea or infusion and drunk. 20 - 30 liberty caps would be regarded as a full dose, but only one or part of a Fly Agaric would be required. The Drugs Act 2005 pertaining to magic mushrooms came into force July 18 2005. Magic mushrooms are now treated as Class A drugs. Some recent local UK surveys have found 12 -15 % of 16 year olds claiming to have used magic mushrooms at least once. Young people in Scotland and Wales are more likely to have taken them. In Scotland for example, one in five 16 years olds will have typically tried them

History

A huge number of hallucinogenic plants and fungi were used by ancient tribes and civilisations usually as a means of entering the spiritual world. Fly agaric mushrooms were used by medicine men or 'shamans' of north east Asia and Siberia. Liberty caps were seen as sacred intoxicants by the Aztecs of Mexico at the time of the Spanish invasion in the 1500s. They do not seem to feature much in European history, although pagan witches used hallucinogenic plants from the potato family, especially Deadly Nightshade and Henbane.

Use of magic mushrooms for pleasure in the UK appears to have developed in the late 1970s as a legal alternative to LSD. Fly agaric use is still rare but use of liberty caps has become quite common, especially amongst teenagers.

The law

The law on magic mushrooms has changed. Mushrooms or any fungus containing psilocin or an ester of psilocin have been brought under the Misuse of Drugs Act and are now class A. This came into force July 18 2005.

Mushrooms are not dealt with in the black market to any great extent at the moment. Indications show that quantities of around 30 mushrooms, if and when they are sold, sell for around £5 per bag. These prices are merely indicative and do not represent a recognised street price.

Effects/risks

The effects of liberty caps are similar to a mild dose of LSD and can vary greatly depending on the mood, situation and expectation of the user. Effects come on after about half an hour and last up to 9 hours, depending on how many are taken. Users often laugh a lot and feel more confident. Some people find that they feel sick, vomit and/or suffer from stomach aches. Higher doses result in a mild to moderate trip with visual and sound distortions.

A bad trip can be very frightening and may include fear, anxiety and paranoia. This is more likely with high doses and where the user already feels anxious. People who experience a bad trip can usually be calmed by others reassuring them. Like LSD flashbacks can be experienced some time later. This is when people re-experience part of a trip and it can be frightening, especially if they do not know it can happen. After a time, these almost invariably fade of their own accord.

The greatest risk is picking the wrong type of mushroom and being poisoned. Eating some varieties especially *Amanita Phalloides* and *Amanita Virosa* could be fatal.

Like LSD tolerance develops very quickly so the next day it might take twice as many liberty caps to repeat the experience. There is thus an inbuilt discouragement to daily use and most users' only use occasionally. Physical dependence and withdrawal symptoms do not result from regular use though some people may become psychologically dependent and feel a desire to use on a regular basis. At present there is no evidence of serious health damage from long term use.

Fly agaric use is more likely to result in unpleasant effects, including nausea and vomiting, stiffness of joints and lack of co-ordination. Strong doses (anything more than one fly agaric mushroom) may result in intense disorientation, convulsions and in some cases death. Fly agaric has not been brought under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

At present, no serious lasting sequels to the long-term use of hallucinogenic mushrooms have been reported, but there are no studies which might permit the assessment of the effects of extended, frequent use.

Updated June 2005

Other Sources of information		
<p>Local organisations that offer Assessment & Treatment options for people with addictions:</p> <p>SMART- Substance Misuse Assessment & Referral Team Poole - 01202 735777</p> <p>BAT – Bournemouth Assessment Team 01202 294888</p> <p>YADAS – Tel 01202 741414 www.edasuk.org/which-area-do-you-live-in/poole/poole-yadas/</p> <p>ShADOWS – Tel 01258 488486 www.edasuk.org/which-area-do-you-live-in/dorset/shadows/</p> <p>ADDACTION – Tel; 01202 558855 www.addaction.org.uk</p> <p>SPS - Specialist Prevention Service Tel: 01305 228200 www.dorsetforyou.com/specialistprevention</p>	<p>Local organisations who offer treatment, advice, information & support for people with addictions:</p> <p>PACT (Poole Addictions Community Team) Tel:01202 633875</p> <p>Steven James Project Tel: 01202 740044 - www.sjcounselling.co.uk</p> <p>Tom Smith Counselling Tel: 07738 380146 email:tom@tiscounselling.co.uk</p> <p>EDP –Tel: 01392 666710- email info@edp.org.uk</p> <p>CADAS - Community Alcohol and Drug Advisory Service Tel:01305 265635 www.dorset.nhs.uk/localservices/alcohol-and-drugs.htm</p> <p>CRI –Tel:01202 203101 - www.cri.org.uk/bit_bournemouth</p> <p>SHARP – Tel:08451234130 www.actiononaddiction.org.uk/treatment/sharp_bournemouth/</p> <p>YADAS – Tel 01202 741414 www.edasuk.org/which-area-do-you-live-in/poole/poole-yadas/</p> <p>ShADOWS – Tel 01258 488486 www.edasuk.org/which-area-do-you-live-in/dorset/shadows/</p> <p>ADDACTION – Tel; 01202 558855 www.addaction.org.uk</p> <p>SPS - Tel: 01305 228200 www.dorsetforyou.com/specialistprevention</p>	<p>National organisations that offer treatment, advice, information & support for people with addictions:</p> <p>Alcohol Concern Tel: 020 7264 0510 www.alcoholconcern.org.uk</p> <p>FRANK-0800 77 66 00 www.talktofrank.com</p> <p>NTA – Tel:020 79721999 www.nta.nhs.uk/</p>

Contact us: Help lines 01202 733322/311600 (Weekdays 8.30am to 4.30pm, 24-hour answer phone)

Email: admin@edasuk.org

EDAS Head Office - 2 West Hill Road, Bournemouth, Dorset BH2 5PG

Statement

Our information and research is designed to help you make informed choices about the services that we provide. From time to time, for illustrative purposes, we may make reference to commonly available products (such as relaxation CDs and popular self-help books). We do not endorse or advertise the use of any specific product.

Disclaimer:

While we make every effort to use up-to-date and reliable sources, we cannot accept liability for errors in the sources that we use and also cannot guarantee to find all the information relevant to your enquiry or request. All responsibility for interpretation of and action upon that information rests with you. This information and advice is offered on the understanding that if you intend to support your treatment with complementary or alternative approaches then it is advisable to consult your GP to ensure that they have a complete understanding of your situation and the complementary or alternative approach that you are considering.

ID: ED-DS-14112011v2

Literature search completed: Drugscope- October 2012

Sheet published: October 2012

Review Date: October 2013

