

What is PCP?

PCP (phencyclidine) was developed in the 1950s as an intravenous anesthetic, but its use for humans was discontinued because it caused patients to become agitated, delusional, and irrational. Today individuals abuse PCP because of the mind-altering, hallucinogenic effects it produces.

What does PCP look like?

PCP is a bitter-tasting, white crystalline powder that is easy to dissolve in water or alcohol. PCP may be dyed various colors and often is sold as a tablet, capsule, liquid, or powder.

How is PCP abused?

Users snort PCP powder, swallow tablets and capsules, or smoke the drug by applying it (in powder form) to a leafy substance such as marijuana, mint, parsley, or oregano. In addition, users increasingly are dipping marijuana or tobacco cigarettes in liquid PCP and smoking them.

Who uses PCP?

Individuals of all ages use PCP. Data reported in the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse indicate that an estimated 6 million U.S. residents aged 12 and older used PCP at least once in their lifetime.

The survey also revealed that many teenagers and young adults use PCP—225,000 individuals aged 12 to 17 and 777,000 individuals aged 18 to 25 used the drug at least once.

PCP use among high school students is a particular concern. More than 3 percent of high school seniors in the United States used the drug at least once in their lifetime, and more than 1 percent used the drug in the past year, according to the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future Survey.

What are the risks?

PCP is an addictive drug; its use often results in psychological dependence, craving, and compulsive PCP-seeking behavior. PCP produces unpleasant psychological effects, and users often become violent or suicidal.

PCP poses particular risks for young people. Even moderate use of the drug can negatively affect the hormones associated with normal growth and development. PCP use also can impede the learning process in teenagers.

High doses of PCP can cause seizures, coma, and even death (often as a consequence of accidental injury or suicide while under the drug's effects). At high doses, PCP's effects may resemble the symptoms associated with schizophrenia, including delusions and paranoia.

Long-term use of PCP can lead to memory loss, difficulty with speech or thought, depression, and weight loss. These problems can persist for up to a year after an individual has stopped using PCP.

What is it called?

The most common names for PCP are angel dust, animal tranquilizer, embalming fluid, ozone, rocket fuel, and wack. Marijuana or tobacco cigarettes that are dipped in PCP are called illy, wet, or fry. (Please see the Street Terms text box below for additional names.)

Street Terms for PCP

Animal tranq	Horse tranquilizer
Black dust	Kools
Boat	Lethal weapon
Cliffhanger	Magic dust
Crystal †	O.P.P.
Dipper	Paz
Dust joint	Peter Pan
Goon dust	Shermans
Happy sticks	Trank



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Is PCP illegal?

Yes, PCP is illegal. PCP is a Schedule II substance under the Controlled Substances Act. Schedule II drugs, which include cocaine and methamphetamine, have a high potential for abuse. Abuse of these drugs may lead to severe psychological or physical dependence.

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