Salvia

Salvia (Salvia divinorum) is an herb common to southern Mexico and Central and South America. The main active ingredient in Salvia, salvinorin A, is a potent activator of kappa opioid receptors in the brain. These receptors differ from those activated by the more commonly known opioids, such as heroin and morphine.

Traditionally, S. divinorum has been ingested by chewing fresh leaves or by drinking their extracted juices. The dried leaves of S. divinorum can also be smoked as a joint, consumed in water pipes, or vaporized and inhaled. Although Salvia currently is not a drug regulated by the Controlled Substances Act, several States and countries have passed legislation to regulate its use. The Drug Enforcement Agency has listed Salvia as a drug of concern and is considering classifying it as a Schedule I drug, like LSD or marijuana.

Health/Behavioral Effects
People who abuse salvia generally experience hallucinations or “psychotomimetic” episodes (a transient experience that mimics a psychosis). Subjective effects have been described as intense but short-lived, appearing in less than 1 minute and lasting less than 30 minutes. They include psychedelic-like changes in visual perception, mood and body sensations, emotional swings, feelings of detachment, and importantly, a highly modified perception of external reality and the self, leading to a decreased ability to interact with one's surroundings. This last effect has prompted concern about the dangers of driving under the influence of salvinorin. The long-term effects of Salvia abuse have not been investigated systematically. Recent experiments in rodents demonstrated deleterious effects of salvinorin A on learning and memory.

Extent of Use
NIDA’s Monitoring the Future Survey of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders asked about salvia abuse for the first time in 2009—5.7 percent of high school seniors reported past year use (greater than the percent reporting ecstasy use). And according to the latest MTF figures the use of Salvia reported by 8th graders remained unchanged from 2011 to 2012 at 1.4 percent. Among 10th and 12th graders there was a decline—2.5 percent of 10th graders and 4.4 percent of 12th graders reported past year abuse.
Although information about this drug is limited, its abuse is likely driven by drug-related videos and information on Internet sites. Because of the nature of the drug’s effects—its use may be restricted to individual experimentalists, rather than as a social or party drug.

Learn More


For more information on *Salvia divinorum* and the Controlled Substances Act, visit http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drugs_concern/salvia_d.pdf.

Complete MTF survey results are available at www.monitoringthefuture.org. For more information on the survey and its findings, also visit www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/monitoring-future.

Citations


About the Survey

Since 1975, the MTF survey has measured drug, alcohol, and cigarette use and related attitudes among 12th graders, nationwide. In 1991, 8th and 10th graders were added to the survey. Survey participants report their drug use behaviors across three time periods: lifetime, past year, and past month. Overall, 44,449 students from 395 public and private schools in the 8th, 10th, and 12th grades participated in the 2012 survey.

The survey is funded by NIDA and conducted by the University of Michigan. Results from the survey are released each December.