



Psilocybin (Magic Mushrooms)

What Are They?

"Magic mushrooms" are mushrooms that naturally contain hallucinogenic drugs - usually psilocybin. Magic mushrooms go by other names such as mushrooms and shrooms.

WARNING: Buyer Beware! Magic mushrooms are illicit drugs and the strength of magic mushrooms can vary greatly. One mushroom may have different concentrations of the active ingredients compared to another. Always assume illicit drugs may contain a very dangerous mixture of potentially lethal synthetic (man-made) opioids like fentanyl and other additives.

What Do They Look Like?

Magic mushrooms may be in the form of dried whole mushrooms or a powder. There are many kinds of mushrooms that look very similar – some of them are not magic mushrooms and can kill you.

How Do They Work?

Psilocybin binds to specific brain cell receptors and alters how the brain responds to signals. This can change a person's mood, thoughts, senses, and perceptions of themselves and of the world around them. People using magic mushrooms may see, hear or feel things that are not there. While some people may experience a dreamlike state, others may experience a "bad trip" – which may include feelings of anxiety, confusion, fear, panic, and paranoia, particularly at high doses.

Why Are They Dangerous?

Magic Mushrooms can have widespread effects on a person's life, including physical, mental, and social harms. Taking magic mushrooms can result in:

- numbness
- high heart rate and blood pressure
- dry mouth
- nausea and vomiting
- muscle weakness, twitching, or convulsions
- exaggerated reflexes
- sweating and high body temperature, often followed by chills and shivering
- loss of urinary control

Impaired judgement during "bad trips" may lead to risk-taking behaviour, which can result in severe injuries or death. A person may also experience flashbacks, negative feelings, or hallucinations after the drug has worn off.

If people harvest their own mushrooms, eating a poisonous mushroom by mistake is common and dangerous. Mushroom poisoning can result in a wide range of symptoms, from an upset stomach to death.



What Does Hallucinogen Toxicity Look Like?

Hallucinogen toxicity can result in erratic behaviour, high blood pressure, fast heart rate, sweating, vomiting, change in breathing, convulsions, and loss of consciousness. It is rare for people to die from overdoses of hallucinogens; however, deaths do occur due to suicide, dangerous behavior, accidentally eating poisonous plant material, or using two or more drugs at the same time (polysubstance use).

If you are concerned about someone who you think may have been using hallucinogenic drugs, **call 9-1-1** and stay with them if it is safe to do so. Help them remain calm and relaxed in a safe, quiet, dark room until help arrives, and encourage them to drink water. **If in doubt, give Naloxone.** Party drugs like Magic Mushrooms can contain dangerous additives like fentanyl or carfentanil. Naloxone will not cause further harm. The **Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act** protects you from drug possession charges when helping in an overdose situation.

Safer Use Tips

If you are using Magic Mushrooms, here are some tips to decrease your risk:

- **Consider your mindset before using hallucinogenic drugs.** Be aware that using hallucinogenic drugs when you feel stressed, anxious, or depressed can lead to a negative experience and result in long-lasting psychological effects.
- **Consider your environment before using hallucinogenic drugs.** Be aware that being in an environment where you feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or with people you don't trust can also increase the risk of panic and paranoia.
- **Start low and go slow.** Start with a "tester dose" and wait before taking more. Be aware that the amount of Psilocybin can be very different from mushroom to mushroom, or even in different parts of a single mushroom, so it can be easy to take too much, or more than you intended. **Take breaks!** Allow time to feel the effects before taking more.
- Do not consume any mushrooms unless you are certain about their identity. Be aware that poisonous mushrooms can look similar!
- **Never inject mushroom products** – this can lead to severe health risks such as blood poisoning, organ failure, and death.
- **Don't use alone.** If you are using alone, call NORS -- the National Overdose Response Service Hotline, at 1-888-688-NORS (6677) so you can get help if you need it.
- **Don't mix with other substances**, including alcohol and prescription or over the counter medications.
- **Stay hydrated and eat well.** Drink lots of water.



- **Take a photo of the drug** before you use it. If you end up getting sick, this can help keep other people safe and makes it easier to help you.
- **Know the signs of an opioid overdose and act!** Stay within cell range or have access to a satellite phone in case you need to call 9-1-1. **Always carry Naloxone with you and know how to use it.** Kits are available for free at locations across the NWT – **make sure your kit doesn't freeze!**

Need Help?

Reach out to your local health centre, community counsellor/mental health professional, or call 8-1-1.