

Psilocybin (“Magic Mushrooms”)

Get the Facts! From the Blue Ridge Poison Center at UVA Health



Psilocybin (sill-oh-SY-bin) is a hallucinogenic compound found naturally in certain types of mushrooms. These mushrooms have a long history of use for spiritual or ceremonial purposes. Called “magic mushrooms” or “shrooms,” they are also used recreationally for their effects on mood, awareness, thoughts, feelings, or behavior. This experience is sometimes called a “trip.” A few states and cities have decriminalized psilocybin, but federally it is an illegal substance.

How do people use psilocybin?

Traditionally the mushrooms are eaten fresh or dried. They may also be brewed to make tea, added to other foods, or ground into a powder and packaged in capsules. Recently, some cannabis dispensaries, smoke shops, and online shops have been selling *mushroom edibles*: gummies, candy bars, and other foods that are reportedly laced with psilocybin or other mind-altering mushroom compounds.

What are the health effects of psilocybin?

Psilocybin users may experience psychoactive effects they find pleasurable, including euphoria, distorted sights and sounds, and hallucinations. However, some users may experience adverse effects such as anxiety, panic, impaired thinking and judgment, and hallucinations which are frightening. There may also be adverse physical effects such as nausea and vomiting, dizziness, loss of coordination, or problems with heart rate and blood pressure.

What are some other concerns about psilocybin?

- **Dangerous behavior:** Hallucinations and distorted judgment may lead to accidents, self-harm, risk-taking, or even suicide.
- **Long-term psychological distress:** Psilocybin may trigger psychosis or other long-lasting mental health problems in some users.
- **Toxic look-alikes:** There are many mushrooms which resemble the psilocybin-containing mushrooms. Some of these are poisonous. Ingesting them by mistake could cause severe illness, including liver failure, kidney failure, or death. Cooking, freezing, or drying the mushrooms does not make them safe.

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Are mushroom edibles safe?

Products are unregulated and often mislabeled, which means consumers have no way of knowing what is actually in them.



Image: Diamond Shroomz™ chocolate bar (www.fda.gov). After many reported illnesses and 3 deaths, these mushroom edible products have been recalled.

Laboratory testing by Blue Ridge Poison Center toxicologists and federal regulators have found that many mushroom edibles contain illegal or dangerous ingredients instead of--or in addition to--psilocybin. Examples include: prescription drugs, compounds found in other toxic mushrooms such as *Amanita muscaria*, kratom, synthetic cannabis or other drugs, and more.

Here are some other concerns about mushroom edibles:

- **Inaccurate dosing:** The contents can vary dramatically, even within the same brand. Consumers may get an inconsistent dose, making it easy to accidentally consume much more than intended.
- **Poisoning and illness:** There have been reports of serious illnesses, seizures, hospitalizations, and even deaths linked to unregulated mushroom edibles.
- **Contamination risks:** Because many of these products are made in unregulated settings, they can be contaminated with heavy metals, industrial solvents, or other dangerous byproducts.
- **Childhood poisoning risks:** Young children can mistake mushroom edibles for regular candy or other treats. Calls to U.S. poison centers about childhood exposures to these products have been rising. Mushroom edibles should always be kept out of the sight and reach of children.

In 2024, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warned consumers not to purchase or use these products due to the risk of severe illness. The FDA also took action to prohibit the use of *Amanita muscaria* and its psychoactive compounds in food products.



Who can help ?

If someone is having health problems after using psilocybin or mushroom edibles, or if a child got into any of these products, call the Blue Ridge Poison Center right away at **1-800-222-1222**. Specially trained nurses, doctors, and pharmacists are standing by 24 hours a day, every day. Free and confidential. ***Scan the code, save the number, save a life.***