

DrugFacts

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Salvia

Salvia (*Salvia divinorum*) is an herb in the mint family native to southern Mexico. It is used to produce hallucinogenic experiences.



How Is Salvia Used?

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 in rolled cigarettes or pipes or vaporized and inhaled.

Although information about salvia is limited, its use may be driven in part by drug-related videos and information on Internet sites. Because of the nature of the drug's effects—brief hallucinogenic experiences that mimic psychosis—it is more likely to be used in individual experimentation than as a social or party drug.

How Does Salvia Affect the Brain?

The main active ingredient in salvia, salvinorin A, is a potent activator of nerve cell targets called kappa opioid receptors. (These receptors differ from the receptors activated by commonly known opioid drugs such as heroin and morphine.) Although salvia is generally considered a hallucinogen, it does not act at serotonin receptors that are activated by other hallucinogens like LSD or psilocybin, and its effects are reported by experienced users to be different from those drugs.

Subjective effects of salvia use 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 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.

What Are the Other Health Effects of Salvia?

The psychological or physical health effects of salvia use have not been investi-

gated systematically, and consequences of long-term use are not known. Experiments in rodents demonstrated deleterious effects of salvinorin A on learning and memory, but there is little evidence of salvia causing dependence or long-term psychiatric problems in humans.

Is Salvia Illegal?

Salvia currently is not a drug regulated by the Controlled Substances Act, but several States and countries have passed legislation to regulate its use.

Learn More

For additional information on salvia, please see http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_chem_info/salvia_d.pdf

For more information on the effects of hallucinogenic drugs, see NIDA's [*Research Report on Hallucinogens and Dissociative Drugs*](#).