

PCP (phencyclidine) is also known as “angel dust”, “ozone”, “zombie”, “rocket fuel”. PCP is a **dissociative drug** that distorts the body’s perception of sight and sound. PCP also causes feelings of detachment from the body or surrounding environment. It is usually used in powder form but it can be taken as a tablet or capsule. The powder is easily mixed with water or alcohol or added to a leafy substance like marijuana. PCP was initially developed as a general anesthetic for surgery, but it was never approved for use in humans because of serious side effects such as delirium (confusion) and extreme agitation or nervousness.

So how does it work?

When snorted or smoked, PCP enters the brain quickly and interferes with the functioning of glutamate (a chemical produced by the body) in the brain, causing a feeling of detachment. Glutamate is responsible for a person’s memory, emotion, and perception of pain so all of these are altered when a person uses PCP. It also increases the level of dopamine (another chemical produced by the body) causing pleasure and increased erratic movements.

What happens when PCP is mixed with....

Alcohol?

PCP is a white, crystalline powder that dissolves easily in alcohol. In liquid, PCP has a distinctive bitter chemical taste. When mixed with alcohol, increased sedation and depression may occur leading to coma or accidental overdose.

Marijuana?

Marijuana is often laced with PCP and called “killer joints” or “supergrass”. When mixed with marijuana, increased effects of PCP may occur.

What if you take PCP while you are pregnant?

•Pregnancy

- Studies in animals or humans have determined that PCP causes birth defects and should not be used in pregnancy.
- Birth defects with PCP include degeneration and death of neurons, irritability, jitteriness, and poor feeding

• Breast Feeding

- PCP is secreted into breast milk and should not be used prior to or during breast feeding.

Is there a chance this substance could contain contaminants if it is obtained “on the street”? If so, what are the effects of these contaminants?

PCP contains many contaminants from being made “on the street”. The color may range from white to tan to dark brown and the consistency may range from powder to a gummy mass.

Short term effects of taking PCP

Judgment

- Use may result in feelings of invulnerability, strength, and power. Most deaths related to PCP are from injury or suicide.
- Use may result in drug dependence and/ or addiction.

Memory

Use may result in euphoria, trance-like effects, and feelings of an “out-of-body” experience, sedation, and depression, all of which may impair memory.

Health

- Use may result in drug dependence and/ or addiction.
- A blank stare, rapid eye movements, and an exaggerated walk may be the most observable effects.
- At low doses, use may result in shallow, rapid breathing, increased blood pressure and heart rate, elevated temperature, numbness, and loss of coordination.
- At high doses, use may result in a dangerous drop in blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing, as well as nausea, blurred vision, dizziness, and decreased sensation of pain
- At very high doses, use may result in convulsions, coma, and death.
- Effects are very unpredictable and may vary from person to person or from use to use.

Long term effects of taking PCP

Judgment

- Use may result in feelings of invulnerability, strength, power, and violence. Most deaths related to PCP are from physical injury or suicide, not drug overdose.
- Use may result in drug dependence and/ or addiction.

Memory

- Use may result in euphoria, trance-like effects, and feelings of an “out-of-body” experience, sedation, and depression, all of which may impair memory.
- Memory loss and depression may last as long as a year after a chronic user stops taking PCP.

Health

- Use may result in drug dependence and/ or addiction leading to craving and drug-seeking behavior.
- Long term use may result in drug withdrawal symptoms (unpleasant mood, intense drug craving) if a chronic user stops taking PCP.
- Long term use may result in memory loss, depression, and trouble thinking and speaking.

References

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