

FACTS

ANGEL DUST

Angel Dust is a common name for the drug phencyclidine (PCP). Other names are Embalming Fluid, and Rocket Fuel. Crystal Super Grass and Killer Joints are names that refer to PCP combined with marijuana.

DESCRIPTION:

Phencyclidine (PCP) is the best known of several related drugs including ketamine, cyclohexamine, and dizocilpine. PCP was first synthesized by a pharmaceutical company in the 1950s and sold under the brand names Sernyl and Sernylan until 1967. It was hoped that PCP could be used as a dissociative anesthetic, because it produced a catatonic state in which patients were dissociated from their environment and from pain, but not unconscious. Problems with side effects as the drug wore off, including agitated behavior and hallucinations made PCP unsuitable for medical use. Ketamine (Ketlar, Ketaject) is less potent, has fewer side effects and is approved for use as a human anesthetic.

PCP became an illicit street drug in the mid-1960s. It was most commonly found in large cities such as New York and San Francisco, and even today, most users tend to live in urban areas. Into the 1970s, PCP appeared mainly as a contaminant of other illicit drugs, especially marijuana and cocaine. This complicated diagnosis of PCP use, as many people did not know that they had ingested the drug.

A moderate amount of PCP often causes users to experience:

- feeling detached, distant, and estranged from their surroundings
- numbness of the extremities
- slurred speech
- loss of coordination may be accompanied by a sense of strength and invulnerability
- a blank stare
- rapid and involuntary eye movements
- an exaggerated gait
- auditory hallucinations
- image distortion
- severe mood disorders
- amnesia may occur

Some other effects which may be experienced are:

- acute anxiety and a feeling of impending doom

- paranoia and violent hostility
- psychoses which is indistinguishable from schizophrenia

Many believe PCP to be one of the most dangerous drugs of abuse.

COMMON FORMS OF THE WAY PCP IS USED

PCP is easy to manufacture and is inexpensively available on the street in most cities. It can be eaten, smoked, injected, snorted, and is readily soluble and will cross the skin barrier if liquid PCP is spilled on skin or clothing. The most common methods of ingestion are eating and smoking marijuana or tobacco on which liquid PCP has been sprayed. PCP is long acting. It accumulates in body fat, and flashbacks can occur as it is released from fat during exercise.

PCP binds to receptors in the brain and interferes with the chemical reactions that mediate the transmission of nerve impulses. It is deactivated slowly by the liver and excreted in urine. Although there are no controlled human studies on PCP intoxication, monkeys allowed free use of PCP will dose themselves repeatedly and maintain an almost continuous state of intoxication. They exhibit withdrawal symptoms if their supply of the drug is restricted. PCP is considered to be psychologically and possibly physically addictive in humans.

SYMPTOMS OF USE:

PCP produces both physiological and psychological symptoms. Effects of the drug are erratic and not always dose-dependent.

Physical symptoms include:

- involuntary rapid movements of the eyes vertically or horizontally
- high blood pressure
- racing heartbeat
- dizziness and shakiness
- drooling
- increased body temperature
- reduced response to pain
- slurred speech
- excessive sensitivity to sound
- lack of muscle coordination
- muscle rigidity or frozen posture
- seizures
- breakdown of muscle and excretion of muscle proteins in urine
- coma and death

Physiological effects of PCP include:

- a slight increase in breathing rate
- more pronounced rise in blood pressure and pulse rate
- shallow respiration
- flushing and profuse sweating.

At high doses of PCP, there is a drop in blood pressure, pulse rate, and respiration. This may be accompanied by nausea, vomiting, blurred vision, flicking up and down of the

eyes, drooling, loss of balance, and dizziness. High doses of PCP can also cause seizures, coma, and death (though death more often results from accidental injury or suicide during PCP intoxication).

Psychological effects at high doses include

- illusions and hallucinations.

PCP Health Hazards

PCP is addictive and its use often leads to psychological dependence, craving, and compulsive PCP-seeking behavior.

Users of PCP report:

- Memory loss
- Difficulties with speech and learning
- Depression
- Weight loss

These symptoms can persist up to a year after cessation of PCP use. PCP has sedative effects, and interactions with other central nervous system depressants, such as alcohol and benzodiazepines, can lead to coma or accidental overdose. Use of PCP among adolescents may interfere with hormones related to normal growth and development. Many PCP users are brought to emergency rooms because of PCP's unpleasant psychological effects or because of overdoses. In a hospital or detention setting, they often become violent or suicidal, and are very dangerous to themselves and to others. They should be kept in a calm setting and should not be left alone.

Sources:

<http://www.patient.co.uk/health/recreational-drugs>

<http://www.drugfree.org/drug-guide/pcp/>