

PHENCYCLIDINE

(Street Names: PCP, Angel Dust, Supergrass, Boat, Tic Tac, Zoom, Shermans)

Introduction:

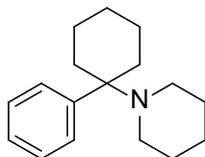
Phencyclidine (PCP) is a dissociative drug that is abused for its hallucinogenic effects. PCP is often sold as a tablet, capsule, liquid, or powder. Examples of street names for PCP include Angel Dust, Hog, Ozone, Rocket Fuel, Shermans, Wack, Crystal, and Embalming Fluid. Street names for PCP combined with marijuana include Killer Joints, Super Grass, Fry, Lovelies, Wets, and Waters.

Licit Uses:

PCP was originally developed in the 1950s as an intravenous anesthetic for veterinary use and discontinued in the 1970s. Its use in humans, however, was discontinued in 1965 due to the high incidence of patients experiencing postoperative delirium with hallucinations. PCP is no longer produced or used for medical purposes in the United States.

Chemistry:

PCP is chemically known as 1-(1-phenylcyclohexyl)piperidine and belongs to a class of drugs called arylcyclohexylamines. PCP appears as a white crystalline powder that is readily soluble in water or alcohol. PCP has a molecular formula of C₁₇H₂₅N and a molecular weight of 243.39 g/mol. The chemical structure of PCP is shown below:



Pharmacology:

PCP is classified as a hallucinogen and induces distortion of sight and sound, while producing feelings of detachment. PCP's effects—which vary by route of administration and dose—include sedation, immobility, amnesia, and marked analgesia. These intoxicating effects can be produced within 2–5 minutes after smoking and 30–60 minutes after swallowing the drug. PCP intoxication may last 4–8 hours, and some users report experiencing subjective effects 24–48 hours after use. While higher doses of PCP produce hallucinations, low to moderate doses (1–5 mg) may induce feelings of detachment from the surroundings and oneself, numbness, slurred speech, and loss of coordination that is accompanied by a sense of strength and invulnerability. More observable effects include a blank stare; rapid, involuntary eye movements; and catatonic posturing, resembling that observed with schizophrenia. Physiological effects include increased blood pressure, rapid and shallow breathing, elevated heart rate, and elevated temperature.

Chronic use of PCP can result in dependency and, upon cessation, withdrawal syndrome. In addition, chronic abuse of PCP can impair memory and thinking. Other effects of long-term use include persistent speech difficulties, suicidal thoughts, anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal.

Illicit Uses:

PCP is abused for its mind-altering effects; PCP abuse peaked in the 1970s and declined in the 1980s and 1990s, before increasing slightly in recent years. PCP is typically used in small quantities, with an average dose of 5–10 mg. Routes of administration include smoking (most common), snorting, or swallowing. Leafy material (e.g., mint, parsley, oregano, tobacco, or marijuana) is saturated with PCP, then subsequently rolled into a cigarette and smoked. A marijuana joint or cigarette dipped in liquid PCP is known as a “dipper.”

User Population:

PCP is predominantly abused by young adults and high school students. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reported in its 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health that, of individuals aged 12 and older, 6.57 million (2.3%) individuals reported using PCP in their lifetime by 2021 and 6.493 million (2.3%) by 2022; these numbers declined to 5.883 millions (2.1%) in 2023.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers National Poison Data System reported 325 PCP exposure case mentions, 116 single exposures, and 0 deaths in 2022; most cases corresponded to individuals aged 20 or older.

The 2024 Monitoring the Future survey indicated that PCP use among 12th graders in the past year increased from 0.7% in 2021 to 1.2% in 2022, decreased to 0.5% in 2023, and increased back to 0.7% in 2024.

Illicit Distribution

PCP is available in powder, crystal, tablet, capsule, and liquid forms; however, PCP is most commonly sold in powder and liquid forms. PCP is occasionally found in tablets sold as MDMA (ecstasy). Prices for PCP range from \$5–\$15 per tablet, \$20–\$30 for 1 gram of powder, and \$200–\$300 for 1 ounce of liquid. For “dippers,” each “dipper” sells for \$10–\$20.

The Drug Enforcement Administration's National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS) Drug database collects scientifically verified data on drug items and cases submitted to and analyzed by participating federal, state, and local forensic drug laboratories. NFLIS-Drug received 4,278 reports of PCP in 2018; 3,502 in 2020; 2,516 in 2022; and 1,926 in 2024 (reports still pending).

Control Status:

PCP is controlled in schedule II of the Controlled Substances Act.

Comments and additional information are welcomed by the Drug and Chemical Evaluation Section; Fax 571-362-4250, Telephone 571-362-3249, or Email DPE@dea.gov.