

# FACT SHEET TWENTY FIVE

## MAGIC MUSHROOMS

### What are Magic Mushrooms?

Magic mushroom is the generic term given to two species of mushrooms that have hallucinogenic properties. The ones that are used most commonly are Psilocybin mushrooms (*Psilocybe semilanceata*) or liberty caps, which are small and tan coloured. The other type used is the Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) this family of red and white spotted toadstools have some unpleasant relatives that are poisonous when eaten.

Both mushrooms grow in the wild and can be found in the UK in autumn, the effect they have depends on how much is taken, which type is taken and what strength they are. The strength can depend on natural variations in the mushrooms such as their freshness, the season they grow in and the region they are found in.

Both mushrooms can be cooked into food or drunk as a tea or infusion, they can be dried and stored for later use or liberty caps can be eaten raw. 20-30 liberty caps would be taken as a strong dose whereas only part of or one fly agaric mushroom is sufficient. They cost about £5 for a handful and although they can be picked in the wild for free, if you get the wrong mushroom it can have deadly consequences.

Magic mushrooms are also known by a number of street names such as magics, mushies, shrooms and liberties. The effects of both mushrooms usually take around 30-60 minutes to kick in and the trip can last upto 10 hours depending on dose, the come down effects can be felt for a further 6 hours after this.

### The Effects of Magic Mushrooms

The effects seen with mushrooms are similar to those seen with LSD and can vary according to mushroom type and dose taken, common effects include distortions in sensory perception, heightened perception, colours and textures of objects become more vivid and a distorted sense of time can occur. Users also report feeling more creative, enlightened or emotionally sensitive.

Other effects include hallucinations - the user believes an imaginary vision is real and Pseudo-hallucinations - unreal images that users know are unreal.

Amanita's can give you an out of body feeling and synesthesia - the occurrence of one type of stimulation that triggers the sensation of another stimulation, such as hearing a sound causing the visualisation of a colour.

Tolerance, the need for increased amounts of the drug to produce the same effect, develops quickly with magic mushrooms and cross-tolerance, developed tolerance to one drug through the use of another drug within its pharmacological class, occurs with the use of other hallucinogens like LSD.

## **The Side Effects of Magic Mushrooms**

Some people feel nauseous, vomit and get stomach pains whilst using magic mushrooms, Amanita's can also lead to joint stiffness, lack of co-ordination and at strong doses convulsions and sometimes death. Because of the distortion of sensory perception, driving is particularly dangerous, mushrooms cause the user to distrust the senses and can result in serious injury or even death.

Flashbacks, or re-experiencing the effects of magic mushrooms, can occur without warning for up to a year or more after use. They can occur at any time or place and may be initiated by stress or the use of other drugs, it is thought that they may be the result of unresolved emotional - psychological conflicts that were exposed during a 'trip'.

Bad trips can occur with the use of magic mushrooms, during which the user feels in extreme danger and experiences confusion, anxiety, pain, paranoia, feelings of helplessness and loss of control. Mushrooms and other hallucinogens sometimes unmask mental or emotional problems previously unknown to the user and should not be used if there is a history of mental illness.

The type of 'trip' experienced may depend on, the strength of the dose, how the user is feeling at the time and the environment they are in. If someone is experiencing a bad trip they should not be left alone, create a calm atmosphere around the user, distract them from their fears and be reassuring, if this does not work medical assistance should be sought.

Magic mushrooms are not recognised as being addictive, but a user may develop a psychological dependence because of the effects of the drug. No withdrawal symptoms have been reported nor have any health problems been linked with long-term use of mushrooms so far.

**A legal note** from the 18 July 2005, as with possession and the supply of prepared mushrooms, the possession and supply of fresh magic mushrooms containing psilocin or an ester of psilocin will be illegal. They will be controlled as a Class A, Schedule 1 drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. Regulations have been drafted to exclude magic mushrooms that occur naturally and are uncultivated. The regulations state that there is no offence committed by an owner of land where magic mushrooms occur naturally but that if they are picked they should be either destroyed or given to a person who has legal authority to possess them.