

PCP side-effects ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I just realized you have no entries on PCP, and am wondering if you could give me some information on it. I have experimented with it a few times, and since then have become very nervous on occasion and I find that I think more "out of the box." Is this common? Could you give me any other information?

— Georg

Answer

Dear Georg,

Thanks for the heads up! PCP is a drug that goes by many names: angel dust, peace pill, rocket fuel, horse tranq, and hog. Georg, you ask whether your experience with the drug is common. Different people experience the drug's effects differently (e.g., one person's euphoria might be another person's nightmare), not to mention the effects based on dosage or whether you are using the drug alone or in combination with other drugs such as alcohol or marijuana. That being said, your feelings of uneasiness and experiences with different "out of the box" thought patterns sound in line with some common effects of PCP use. However, it's unclear how much you used and how long it's been since you last used — both of which could influence any lasting effects. If you're particularly concerned about any of these symptoms, consider talking with a trusted health care provider or mental health professional. S/he may be able to help you address specific concerns and alleviate your nervousness. For more of the nitty gritty on PCP use, read on.

First, a bit of history: The drug was first synthesized in 1926 and was used in the 1950s as an anesthetic (or numbing agent). It was eventually taken off the medical market in 1967 when patients who were put on higher doses for operations experienced uneasiness, anxiety, and hallucinations (fun fact: until 1979 it was still manufactured and approved for use by vets — maybe that's how it got the name "horse tranquilizer"?). PCP acts on the brain at three brain targets, making it a "dissociative anesthetic;" drugs that act on these brain targets block the sensation of pain, but also produce other psychological effects. At low doses (one to five milligrams), PCP can act as a sedative and result in a "rubbery leg" sensation. Some adverse reactions at low doses include effects like slurred speech, twitches or seizures, and nystagmus (a

jittering back and forth of the eyes, which is characteristic of PCP). The psychological effects that accompany lower doses of PCP can wear off in as little as a few hours, but if you take the drug repeatedly or take higher doses of the drug, you could experience its effects for weeks. Some people report feeling depressed, anxious, and a loss of reality after the “drug high” wears off.

At higher doses (five to ten milligrams), PCP can make you feel euphoric and invincible, but it can also lead to nausea, blurred vision, agitation, auditory or visual hallucinations, breaks from reality, aggressive or violent outbursts, and catatonia (being immobile or in a stupor). Additionally, doses of PCP greater than ten milligrams could result in coma. Other rare, but possible, symptoms include effects on muscles in the body, resulting in heart arrhythmias, a rise in body temperature (hyperthermia), and a condition called rhabdomyolysis (when your body breaks down muscle tissue and releases it into the blood, with a toxic effect on the kidney).

Based on what you described, Georg, it sounds like what you’re experiencing is pretty common with PCP experimentation. Hope this helped feed your mind with some new information on the topic, but if you’re jonesin’ for more, check out the [LSD, PCP, & Other Hallucinogens](#) [2] category in the [Go Ask Alice! Alcohol and Other Drugs](#) [3] archives. Down for a little more experimentation? Then, you might be interested in checking out some [ways to get a natural high](#) [4] (spoiler alert — one of the suggestions is an orgasm!).

Alice!

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