

Raves

Part 2

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

Raves

Across the country, teens and young adults enjoy all-night dance parties known as "raves" and increasingly encounter more than just music. Dangerous substances known collectively as club drugs - including MDMA (ecstasy) ketamine, GHB, and Rohypnol are gaining popularity.

Although users may think these substances are harmless, research has shown that club drugs can produce a range of unwanted effects, including hallucinations, paranoia, amnesia, and, in some cases, death. When used with alcohol, these drugs can be even more harmful. Also, there are great differences among individuals in how they react to these substances and no one can predict how he or she will react. Some people have been known to have extreme, even fatal, reactions the first time they use club drugs. And studies suggest club drugs found in party settings are often adulterated or impure and thus even more dangerous. Because some club drugs are colorless, tasteless, and odorless, they are easy for people to slip into drinks. Some of these drugs have been associated with sexual assaults, and for that reason they are referred to as "date rape drugs."

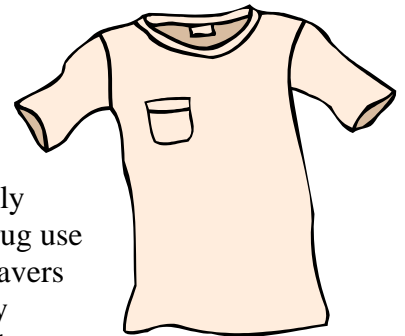
Rave Promotion

Raves, which began as secretive, after-hours, private dance parties, are now heavily commercialized. Many promoters have preserved the tradition of rave location secrecy, more as a novelty than as a necessity. In this tradition, raves are rarely promoted in the open media but are advertised on flyers found only at record shops clothing stores, at other rave parties and clubs and

on rave Internet sites. The flyers or Internet advertisements typically provide only the name of the city where the rave will be held and a phone number for additional information. The location of the rave often is given to the caller over the telephone, but many promoters further maintain secrecy by providing only a location, called a "map point," where ravers go the night of the rave. At the map point, ravers are told the actual location of the rave. The map point is usually a record or clothing store within a 20-minute drive of the rave.

Rave Clothing and Paraphernalia

Many young ravers wear distinctive clothing and carry paraphernalia commonly associated with club drug use and the rave culture. Ravers dress for comfort. They usually wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothes and dress in layers, allowing them to remove clothing as they become overheated from dancing for hours. Many wear loose shorts or very wide-legged or baggy pants. Ravers wear T-shirts, bikini tops, tank tops, tube tops and open-back halter tops to keep cool. After hours of dancing and often after using MDMA – which elevates body temperature – many ravers have removed most of their clothing. Some ravers, especially females, wear costumes to rave events, dressing as princesses, cartoon characters, or other fantasy figures that match the theme of the rave (e.g. futuristic, space, mystic).



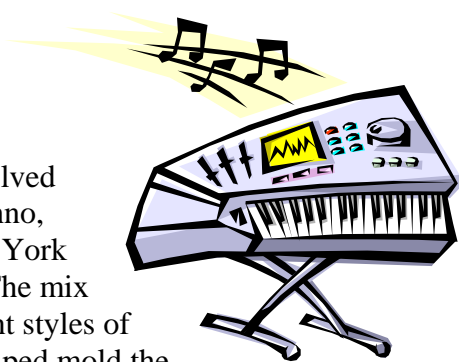
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Ravers often wear bright accessories like bracelets, necklaces and earrings made of either plastic bead or pill-shaped sugar candies. MDMA users sometimes use these accessories to disguise their drugs, stringing MDMA tablets mixed with the candies. Many ravers chew on baby pacifiers or lollipops to offset the effects of involuntary teeth grinding caused by MDMA. Pacifiers are worn around the user's neck, often on plastic beaded necklaces.

Many people bring various items to rave events to enhance the effects of MDMA. Ravers use bright chemical lights and flashing lights to heighten the hallucinogenic properties of MDMA and the visual distortions brought on by its use. Chemical glow sticks, bracelets and necklaces are commonly worn at raves and waved in the eyes of MDMA users for visual stimulus. Ravers often insert flashing red lights in their belly buttons (held in place with a mild adhesive) and pin blinking lights in the shape of hearts, stars and animals to their clothing to provide additional visual stimulation to MDMA users. Ravers that use MDMA often wear painter's masks with menthol vapor rub applied to the inside of the mask. MDMA users believe that by inhaling the menthol fumes, they are enhancing the effects of the drug. They may be adding to their risk of hypothermia, however, because the fumes cause eyes and nasal passages to dry out.

Rave Music

Rave music evolved from 1980s techno, house and New York garage music. The mix of these different styles of dance music helped mold the modern version of electronic rave music. Today, rave music falls into several categories: ambient, techno, trance, progressive trance, cybertrance, house, jungle, drum 'n' bass, techstep, garage and big beat.



Although a casual listener may not be able to distinguish between techno and trance, ravers know the music well, and several DJs and bands – unfamiliar to most people – are internationally famous within the rave community. Today's rave DJs are skilled stage performers and are considered artists much like musicians. They mix electronic sounds, beats and rhythms, often synchronizing the music to a laser program. Popular DJs sell their music and perform live at the largest rave parties and clubs around the world. Rave organizers announce the appearance of famous DJs on their flyers and on the Internet to promote upcoming raves.

Conclusion

Raves have developed over the past decade from a small subculture to the highly commercialized and widespread exploitation of young people by large-scale rave promoters. The growing awareness of the nature of rave activity and the effects of club drug use have moved many communities to action. In order to curtail rave activity, communities and law enforcement agencies are enforcing existing fire codes, health and safety ordinances, and liquor laws and are establishing juvenile curfew and licensing requirements for large public gatherings. They are requiring rave promoters and club owners to pay for building or liquor licenses, medical services and security for their events, all in an effort to force rave promoters to move or cease their operations.

(See the Fact Sheet, *Raves Part 1*, for additional information.)

Information provided by:
Information Bulletin, April 2001
U.S. Department of Justice
National Drug Intelligence Center

National Institute on Drug Abuse
http://www.drugabuse.gov/Published_Articles/fundrugs.html