

## BUT IT'S LEGAL . . . ISN'T IT?

### Salvia, Safety and the Law

Some teens think that salvia divinorum is safe just because you can buy it on the Internet or in gas stations or smoke shops. But that's far from the truth.

Salvia – which is often sold in baggies labeled “incense” – is not safe at all. Some teens that smoke salvia experience scary hallucinations and panic attacks. What's more, since salvia messes with your brain, salvia users might be more likely to make stupid decisions, like having unprotected sex, doing dumb and dangerous stunts, or driving high or buzzed.

Why is salvia legal if it can make you panic, hallucinate and act stupid?

Well, in some states, it's not legal. Several U.S. states – including Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Wisconsin have banned it. Several more states are working on legislation to make salvia illegal. Some individual cities and towns have outlawed it.

If salvia is illegal in your state, that means buying, selling, or using it puts you at risk for penalties like fines, probation and possibly even jail time. If salvia is legal in your state, it probably won't be for long. In the meantime, you're putting yourself at risk for panic attacks, hallucinations and risky behavior.

## TALKING BACK

### How to Stay Away from Salvia Divinorum

If someone offers you salvia, try one of these lines:

- “No thanks. Let's see a movie instead.”
- “No way! No one knows what that stuff really does to you.”
- “No thanks. Smoking makes me cough.”

## WORK IT OUT

Test your knowledge about salvia by answering the following questions:

1. Which is NOT another name for salvia divinorum?  
A. “Crazy Sally”                      B. “Magic Mint”  
C. “Sage of the Seers”                D. “Maria Pastora”
2. People who smoke salvia divinorum experience effects including:  
A. Uncontrollable laughing    B. Hallucinations  
C. Dizziness                              D. All of the above
3. If something is legal, that means it must be safe to use.  
A. True                                      B. False
4. Salvia divinorum is a plant from the \_\_\_\_\_ family.  
A. Marijuana                              B. Oregano  
C. Mint                                        D. Aloe
5. Salvia is sometimes sold at gas stations or smoke shops in baggies marked “\_\_\_\_\_.”  
A. “Incense”                              B. “Bath salts”  
C. “Cheese”                                D. “Breath mints”

Answers: 1. A; 2. D; 3. B; 4. C; 5. A

# SALVIA DIVINORUM



STAY SAFE SERIES

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## HERBAL INSANITY

# A LIVING NIGHTMARE

## A Salvia Trip

The feeling hits you just a few minutes after you take a puff. You feel weak and wobbly — you need to sit down. Then you get dizzy and the room starts spinning. The walls look like they're melting as the colors and objects start to blend together.

Then you start to panic. You can't breathe and you can't tell what's real anymore, but you do know that everything is scary. You're hallucinating, and you want it to stop.

When you wake up, you don't remember a thing. Instead, your friends have to give you the play-by-play of the night: You punched your best friend when he was trying to help you, and you scratched up your arms with your own fingernails.

This isn't cocaine, ecstasy or LSD. This terrible, nightmarish high is from Salvia Divinorum, which is a drug commonly abused by teenagers.

## ONE SCARY PLANT

### Where Salvia Comes From

Salvia is a leafy, green member of the mint family. It's not actually a new drug: In Mexico, it's been used by the Mazatec Indians in religious rituals and ceremonies for hundreds of years. Mazatec shamans believe that salvia can produce religious visions — that's why one of the common street names for salvia is "Diviner's Sage."

Other names for salvia include "Maria Pastora," "Sally-D," "Sage of the Seers" and "Magic Mint." When users smoke, chew, or ingest the liquid from the plant's leaves, this drug produces intense, hallucinogenic highs. Most users smoke salvia out of pipes, but some people choose to chew the leaves or ingest it in liquid form (also called a "tincture").

Recently, American teens and young adults have started to use salvia to get high. Because salvia is relatively cheap and legal in many states, teens mistakenly believe that the plant is a "safe" drug. In reality, you don't want to mess with this plant.



# BRAIN MELTDOWN

## The Short-Term Effects of Salvia

The active ingredient in salvia is a chemical called Salvinorin A. When you smoke or chew salvia, Salvinorin A travels through your bloodstream and straight to the parts of your brain that control things like your mood, motor skills and your ability to feel pain. People who use salvia are often expecting to feel relaxed and mellow. Instead, some salvia users get the opposite. The immediate effects of salvia divinorum use can include:



- Hallucinations
- Uncontrollable laughter
- Mood swings
- Diarrhea
- Confusion
- Loss of coordination
- Dizziness
- Slurred speech

## INTO THE UNKNOWN

### The Long-Term Effects of Salvia

The scariest thing about salvia is that nobody knows that much about it. Unlike other drugs like marijuana, cocaine, or LSD, there haven't been any long-term studies of salvia. That means it's hard to tell exactly what regular salvia use will do to you in five weeks, five months, or even five years.

Researchers are beginning to study the effects that long-term use can have on the brain and body. Some research suggests that prolonged salvia use can cause feelings of *déjà vu* and can affect learning and memory.

Scientists may not know exactly what salvia use can do to you in the long run, but that doesn't mean that it's safe. Back in the 1950s, people thought cigarettes were safe — but then people who smoked started getting sick. Now we know that smoking causes all sorts of health problems like cancer, emphysema and heart disease.

Do you really want to be a test subject? Think about it.

# THE SALVIA FAMILY

## Are They All Bad?

You may have seen plants for sale labeled "Salvia," and wondered why the store was selling this hallucinogenic plant. Is the store selling a dangerous drug?

Actually, no. "Salvia" is just the scientific name for any plant in the mint family, the Salvia genus. There are over 1,000 plants in the mint family, and they come in a variety of different colors.

Even though Salvia Divinorum is in the mint family, you probably won't find it at your local plant store. Don't worry, if the label doesn't say "Salvia Divinorum," then it's just another garden plant.

## FEELING NOTHING

### Brett's Story

Seventeen-year-old Brett seemed like he had his life together: He was popular and athletic and was a straight-A student.

One January night in 2006, Brett zipped himself into a tent in his garage, lit a charcoal grill and breathed in the toxic smoke. He died from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Brett left an eight-page suicide note that described how meaningless his life felt and how pointless everything seemed. Salvia, Brett wrote, had helped him see the truth.

Seven months before he died, Brett ordered salvia divinorum on the Internet. He wasn't a druggie — but he thought that because salvia was legal it had to be okay. Brett quickly became a regular user, smoking salvia a few times a week.

Something happened when Brett started using salvia. Brett's mother believes the drug made him "snap." She believes that if Brett had never started smoking salvia, he'd be alive today.

