

Unregulated Highs: Psychedelics

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Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods
at Case Western Reserve University

A Public Health Blind Spot

In recent years, there has been an increase in stores selling high-potency, unregulated products like hemp (e.g., Delta-8), kratom (a quasi-opiate), and other psychoactive products (e.g., hallucinogens). Despite their potent effects, these products are being sold legally, falling outside most regulatory frameworks, and are often sold alongside snacks and energy drinks with few, if any, age purchasing requirements. In this *Unregulated Highs* series, we provide key information about what these products are, how they came to be, and what our local Cleveland data show.

What are Psychedelics?

A psychedelic is a type of substance that changes how people think and feel—often **creating vivid sensory experiences or hallucinations**, an altered sense of time or self, and shifts in mood or awareness. Common examples include psilocybin (or magic mushrooms), LSD, and ketamine. The **effects of these substances vary widely** depending on the substance, dose, person, setting, and other active ingredients. In recent years, **public interest in microdosing**--taking small amounts of psychedelics--has grown substantially.¹ While many of the well-known substances are not legal, a variety of products now sold in gas stations and corner stores may list ingredients that are derived from or mimic psychedelic compounds. These may include substances like muscimol, extracted from the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom, or synthetic analogs of controlled substances (e.g., psilocin).



What do Products Look Like?

Products are **often available as various edibles**--most often gummies, candies, and other baked goods--but can also be found in drinkable or other forms. **Ingredients used in these products are highly variable** and range from blends of “functional mushrooms” (see package below on the left) to non-disclosed “proprietary” or “nootropic” blends (see package below on the right). Some products marketed may **combine their blends with other substances**, like intoxicating hemp (see package below on the left). Given the relatively limited oversight, **package labeling is not consistent with respect to ingredient disclosure and dosing guidelines**. For example, dosing guidelines may not provide usable information for consumers to make educated decisions about the appropriate serving size--see labels below.



What are the Risks?

The broad variety of ingredients used in these products, in hand with their relatively new emergence, makes it difficult to fully assess precise health risks they pose to the broader public. However, limited oversight in how products are made or labeled make it difficult to know exactly what it contains as well as what effects to anticipate may pose a serious risk to consumers. Additionally, the lack of age restrictions as well as their common candy form may also present a unique risk to youth and adolescents. As an example, in 2024, products under the brand, *Diamond Shruumz*, were recalled in connection with an outbreak of **serious illness that affected an estimated 180 individuals across 41 states--three of whom who died.**² Two adolescent girls who consumed a chocolate bar subsequently experienced **seizures and reduced consciousness** necessitating emergency services and hospitalization.³ In the investigation into this outbreak, products were found to contain undisclosed psilocin, among a number of other non-disclosed ingredients.²

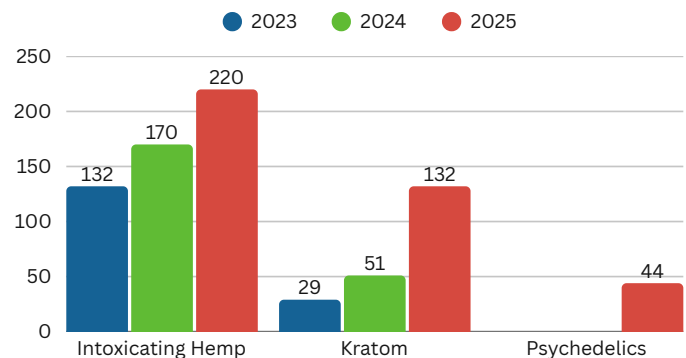
Psychedelic Mushrooms: A Cleveland Snapshot

Retail Availability in Cleveland, Ohio

In 2025, the PRCHN expanded its Cleveland Inventory of Food and Tobacco Retailers to include the availability of psychedelic mushroom products in tobacco retailers such as gas stations and corner stores. Nearly **one in 10 (11%) tobacco retailers sold these products.** While this represents just 44 out of nearly 400 retailers, when compared to trends observed for other psychoactive substances available (e.g., kratom, intoxicating hemp), it is expected that these products will likely become more available in the coming years.

Adult Use of Psychedelics

In the 2025 Cleveland Health Survey, **19% of adults** (ages 18 and older) **said they had ever used a hallucinogen or psychedelic product** (including LSD, PCP, ketamine, psilocybin, etc. Among those who had ever used them, **16% said they had used hallucinogens in the past year.** Notably, this includes those who may have used a psychedelic substance not purchased in a retail setting.



References:

1. Yang KH, Satybaldiyeva N, Allen MR, Ayers JW, Leas EC. State cannabis and psychedelic legislation and microdosing interest in the US. In JAMA Health Forum 2024 Jun 7 (Vol. 5, No. 6, pp. e241653-e241653). American Medical Association.
2. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Investigation of Illnesses: Diamond Shruumz-Brand Chocolate Bars, Cones, & Gummies (June 2024). FDA. 2024 November 15. Available from: <https://www.fda.gov/food/outbreaks-foodborne-illness/investigation-illnesses-diamond-shruumz-brand-chocolate-bars-cones-gummies-june-2024>.
3. Walker HL. Notes from the Field: Severe Health Outcomes Linked to Consumption of Mushroom-Based Psychoactive Microdosing Products—Arizona, June–October 2024. MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. 2025;74.

Data Sources: (1) 2025 Cleveland Health Survey conducted by the Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods in collaboration with the Cleveland Department of Public Health. Methodology is available at <https://prchn.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2025-Cleveland-Health-Survey-Methodology-Report.pdf> Results are available at: <https://prchn.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-Cleveland-Health-Survey-Overall.pdf> (2) 2025 Cleveland Inventory of Food and Tobacco Retailers is conducted by the Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods; more information is available at: <https://prchn.org/ciftr/>.

Image Sources: Images provided by PRCHN staff and/or students.

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