Hallucinogens are a group of drugs that can change a person’s perception, so that they see or hear things that are distorted or don’t actually exist.

**Hallucinogens**

Hallucinogens have been used for centuries by various cultures for their mystical and spiritual associations. People pick mushroom varieties such as ‘gold tops’ and then cook them or eat them as they would normal mushrooms. Synthetic psychedelics were developed in the twentieth century, becoming popular in the 1960s and early 1970s.

**Forms of the Drug**

Some hallucinogens occur naturally in plant species: others are manufactured in laboratories. They vary widely in their origin and chemical composition.

One of most popular hallucinogens is LSD, LSD is odourless, white and tasteless. It is usually soaked into decorated small squares of absorbent paper and taken orally. Each square represents one dose.

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- **LSD**, also known as acid.
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**Risks and harms**

**Physical problems**
- Increase in heart rate and rise in blood pressure
- Increased risk for those with cardiac problems
- Fatality or accidents can occur as a result of ‘tripping’ in unsafe environments, as a result of people believing they can fly, or freaking out during a bad trip i.e. near water or bridges
- Difficulties processing information (brain activity)

**Mental health problems**
- Depression is also common following experience. Effects of these types of drugs.
- Aggravated symptoms of mental illness. Some users experience unpredictable flashbacks, where they relive the effects of the drug without actually using it. These can sometimes occur years after the drug has been taken.
- Increased aggression (mainly related to paranoia) leading to assaults
- Increased risk-taking behaviour due to feelings of decreased inhibition
- Increased risk of liver and kidney damage
- Emotional problems and social problems
- Nausea and sometimes vomiting
- Body sensations such as twitches, feeling weak, numb or shaky
- Changes in thought processes
- Nausea and sometimes vomiting
- Restlessness, anxiety and sometimes even violent behaviour.

**Chemically, LSD is very similar to the neurotransmitter serotonin, and the effect of the drug increases the rate of sensory information delivery into the brain, thus essentially flooding it with an excess of sensation. Other effects may include loss of concentration and out-of-body experiences.**

Blind subjects who take LSD in experimental situations do not experience any visual illusions at all. Hallucinations are usually warped visual exaggerations of normal visual input to the brain, and could be more properly referred to as illusions.