



Salvia divinorum¹

Salvia Divinorum (pronounced SAL-vee-ah Dee-vin-OR-um), a plant that contains the hallucinogen Salvinorin A, is becoming an increasing concern due to its abuse in the Northeast, Midwest, and Pacific regions of the country. Neither Salvia divinorum nor Salvinorin A is federally regulated in the United States or controlled in any other country except Australia. Salvia divinorum is openly distributed via Internet sites and "head shops" located throughout the United States.

Salvia divinorum is a perennial herb in the mint family that resembles sage. The plant is native to Mexico, but can be grown in any humid, semitropical climate as well as indoors. The plant grows in large clusters and grows to over 3 feet tall.

Salvia divinorum is used via various methods of administration. Like tobacco, Salvia divinorum can be smoked or chewed. It can also be brewed and ingested as a tea. When converted into liquid extract, Salvia divinorum can be vaporized and inhaled. Salvinorin A is also sold in various types of liquids; in this case, the liquid is held under the tongue for 15-30 minutes, slowly entering the bloodstream through absorption in the mouth. Using pure extract and liquids, as they are much more potent than a normal salvia leaf and hold larger amounts of Salvinorin A can be extremely dangerous and the effects are often extremely unnerving and there is a very real potential for physical danger with its use.

Immediately after ingesting the drug, abusers typically experience vivid hallucinations including: out-of-body experiences, sensations of traveling through time and space, and feelings of merging with inanimate objects. Some abusers experience intense synesthesia, ones' senses become confused. It is not uncommon for Salvia divinorum to produce a very physical sensation of pressure on the body. This is a relatively unique effect of Salvia divinorum. Described as a pulling or pushing of the body in a particular direction, some people find themselves pinned to the floor for the duration of their experience referred to as *Salvia's Gravity*. Some abusers report that the drug causes them to become introverted and unable to communicate clearly. Hallucinogenic effects generally last 1 hour or less.²

Onset	5 - 30 seconds
Coming Up	30 sec - 2 minutes
Plateau	3 - 10 minutes
Coming Down	20 - 30 minutes
After Effects	15 - 20 minutes

High doses of Salvia divinorum can cause unconsciousness and short-term memory loss. Long-term effects are not medically confirmed, however, abuser reports indicate similar long-term negative effects as with other hallucinogens including depression, flashbacks, and schizophrenia. First time abusers often report negative experiences to the point of not using Salvia divinorum a second time.

1 National Drug Intelligence Center, April 2003 – Information Bulletin 2003-L0424-003

2 www.erowid.org – Salvia Divinorum, 2004

When vaporized and inhaled, with the use of some of the vaporizers sold for marijuana inhalation, the dose goes well above 500 - 1000 mcg and the effects can be very alarming and DEADLY.

"I have seen several people get up and lunge around the room falling over furniture, babbling incomprehensible nonsense and knocking their heads into walls. Several people have tried to wander out of the house. When the experience is over they have no memory of any of this. In fact they usually remember very different events. To an outside observer people in this condition have a blank look in their eyes as if no one is present (and perhaps no one is). It is also common for people to have a facial expression, which is probably best described as being like that of a frightened animal. It appears that at these "larger" doses one completely loses awareness of, and control over, the physical body and for some reason part of the brain causes the body to get up and move about recklessly while the individual has no awareness of where their physical body is or what it is doing. It seems inevitable that one of these days some careless person will do too large a dose without a sitter and will wander out in the street, or hurt themselves in some way."³

St. Peters, Missouri is the first community to enact a local ordinance designed to regulate the distribution of *Salvia divinorum*. The ordinance, enacted in January 2003, makes it unlawful "for any person to engage in the sale or distribution of *Salvia divinorum*, a.k.a. Salvinorin A, or any variation thereof, to an individual who is seventeen years of age or younger." According to the city's Counsel the ordinance was deemed necessary due to the high rates of abuse by adolescents and concerns that the herb poses a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of its residents.

Salvia divinorum is widely distributed through the InterNet. Prices vary depending on form and growing region. *Salvia divinorum* from Hawaii and Sierra Mazateca (Central Mexico) bring the highest prices. *Leaves* sell for \$15 to \$120 an ounce, *plants* sell for \$20 to \$45 per plant, ground/dry leaves sell for \$30 - \$40 per package, and *liquid extract* sells for \$110 to \$300 an ounce (liquid extract is produced by crushing the leaves and then using solvents to extract the Salvinorin A.) The main delivery system for distribution is package delivery services.

In October 2002, HR 5607 (the Hallucinogen Control Act of 2002) was introduced to Congress with provisions to regulate *Salvia divinorum* and Salvinorin A. In response to this legislation, a group was formed to lobby Congress to fight any attempts to regulate the use or availability of *Salvia divinorum* and Salvinorin A in the United States. To date (2009) there has been no movement by Congress to regulate *Salvia*.

Ohio

On April 6, 2009, Salvia Divinorum will become illegal in Ohio. This legislation makes Salvia Divinorum a Schedule I controlled substance in this state.

Due to *Salvia divinorum*'s propensity to cause individuals to become introverted it is unlikely that it will become popular among the *club drug* group. With lack of regulation, easy access via the InterNet, and some adolescents looking for a *legal* way to get high it is likely that increasing numbers of adolescents will experiment with and abuse this drug.

For videos showing people using and under the influence of *Salvia* go to *YouTube.com* and search for "salvia".