

# Hallucinations

## What are hallucinations?

Hallucinations are distorted perceptions of reality. A person having a hallucination may see images or hear noises that are not actually present. In some cases, visual hallucinations will cause a person to see light and color differently, while other times the distortion may be more dramatic. For example, a person who is hallucinating may experience paranoia or even “see” someone trying to harm them.

Hallucinations can also involve the senses of taste, touch, and smell, although this is less common. Drugs that cause hallucinations can also dull the user’s sense of pain and cause vivid—and sometimes scary—hallucinations, which can result in a fearful reaction of wild, violent behavior.

## What causes hallucinations?

Hallucinations can be caused by a number of factors, including drug use. They can result from taking high doses of drugs such as LSD, mescaline, or PCP that affect the neurotransmitter serotonin. An overdose of stimulant drugs, including cocaine and methamphetamine, can cause sensory hallucinations; some users even report feeling bugs crawling on their skin.

In addition, hallucinations may occur when alcoholics abstain from drinking. Alcoholics often experience hallucinations thirty-six to seventy-two hours after withdrawal from alcohol.

People with Alzheimer’s disease, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia may also experience hallucinations as a part of mental illness.

## Web resource

### ***SAMHSA: Tips for Teens***

The SAMHSA site provides clear information on the signs and dangers of hallucinogen drug use. It provides links to other sites on drug use prevention.