DMT: the facts on *one page*

CHECKED 21 OCTOBER 2026 Education only: no doses, no preparation, no sourcing, no advice to use.

What DMT is

N,N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT) is a simple tryptamine, a close chemical cousin of the brain messenger serotonin. It is a psychedelic that acts mainly through the serotonin 5-HT2A receptor, according to animal and lab work.

Source: What is DMT?

Where it occurs

DMT occurs in many plants and animals, including mammals, and is detectable in human blood and urine. It was first made in a lab in 1931 and reported in a plant in 1946. It has never been measured in a living human brain.

Source: What is DMT?; Does the brain make DMT?

How long effects lasted in studies

Injected into a vein in hospital studies, DMT's effects peaked within about 2 to 3 minutes and were negligible by 30 minutes; in one study of 13 volunteers they stayed above placebo for 17 minutes. The enzyme MAO-A clears it very fast. This describes research, not what anyone should expect.

Source: How long does DMT last?

What's established, and what's still open

ESTABLISHED	Injected DMT's effects peaked within minutes and were negligible by 30 (1994 hospital studies). How long does DMT last?
ESTABLISHED	DMT is detectable in human body fluids. What the tiny levels mean is still preliminary. Does the brain make DMT?
PRELIMINARY	In one small placebo-controlled trial for depression, scores fell 7.35 points more with DMT than placebo after two weeks. DMT therapy research
UNRESOLVED	Which enzyme makes DMT in mammals: mice bred without INMT, the textbook enzyme, showed no obvious drop in their own psychedelic tryptamines. DMT myths, fact-checked
ESTABLISHED	DMT markedly reduces the brain's alpha rhythm in EEG recordings (13 volunteers, placebo-controlled). What happens in the brain on DMT
PRELIMINARY	In 3,778 self-selected forum reports, 45.5% described an entity; "machine elves" were 2.9% of encounters. Machine elves: what the phrase means
UNRESOLVED	Whether the human brain releases DMT, at death or at any other time. Does the brain release DMT when you die?
UNRESOLVED	What the beings people report are. Studies record what people say; none tests whether anything exists outside the experience. Machine elves: what the phrase means

Established: shown in peer-reviewed studies and not seriously disputed. Preliminary: early, small, animal-only or indirect. Unresolved: an open question.

Often confused with DMT

Ayahuasca. A traditional Amazonian brew of DMT plus β-carbolines that block the enzyme MAO-A: that is why it acts when swallowed, why its effects last hours, and why it can interact dangerously with some medicines, such as SSRI antidepressants. Source: Ayahuasca vs DMT

5-MeO-DMT. A different drug: DMT with a methoxy group at position 5, best known from the Sonoran Desert toad, binding the 5-HT1A receptor most strongly; not named in Canada's CDSA schedules, which does not mean approved or safe. Source: 5-MeO-DMT vs DMT

The law in Canada

DMT and its salts are item 7 of Schedule III of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Possessing, trafficking, importing, exporting or producing it is an offence unless the regulations or an exemption allow it, and DMT that occurs in nature has no exception. The Controlled Substances Regulations in force since 1 October 2026 list it as a restricted drug; they do not make it legal. General information, not legal advice.

Source: Is DMT legal in Canada?

If someone is in danger

Call 911 for immediate danger or urgent medical help, including if someone is unconscious, not breathing or having a seizure.

In Ontario, the Ontario Poison Centre is at 1-800-268-9017.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day.

Learn more

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the DMT Library: every guide named on this sheet

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