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Psychedelic drug users tend to have better overall physical health than non-users, study finds

by [Eric W. Dolan](#) — March 12, 2021 in [Mental Health](#), [Psychedelic Drugs](#)



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The use of psychedelic substances is associated with better physical health, according to preliminary research published in the *Journal of Psychopharmacology*. But the cause of this relationship remains unclear.

“There has recently been promising research on the mental health benefits of classic psychedelics, but very little remains known about how classic psychedelics may impact long-term physical health outcomes. I’m curious to find out,” said Otto Simonsson of the University of Oxford, the corresponding author of the new study.

For their study, the researchers analyzed data from 171,766 adults who responded to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health between 2015 and 2018. The annual survey, which is designed to measure the prevalence of substance use and mental health issues in the United States, asked participants if they had ever used psychedelic drugs and also collected other information, such as self-assessed overall health and body mass index.

About 14% of the sample reported having used a classic psychedelic substance such as LSD, mescaline, psilocybin, or DMT at least once.

After controlling for a number of variables — including age, sex, household income, education and the use of other drugs — the researchers found that those who reported having ever used a psychedelic drug tended to have better self-reported health compared to those who had never used such substances. Participants who had used a psychedelic drug also had significantly lower odds of being overweight or obese.

“The findings suggest that lifetime classic psychedelic use is associated with a range of physical health outcomes. However, caution should be exercised in inferring causality,” Simonsson told PsyPost.

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In particular, the correlational nature of the data limits the interpretation of the results. Based on previous research, the researchers believe that the “transcendent experience occasioned by classic

psychedelics” can result in “long-term changes in health behavior that contribute to better physical health.” However, it is also possible that people who have better physical health are more likely to use psychedelic substances compared to those with worse physical health.

“The main question is still whether classic psychedelics positively impacts long-term physical health outcomes, which needs to be tested in double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled trials,” Simonsson said. “We are always open to collaborations with other research teams.”

The study, “[Associations between lifetime classic psychedelic use and markers of physical health](#)”, was authored by Otto Simonsson, James D Sexton, and Peter S Hendricks.

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