

Ibogaine

Ibogaine is the main alkaloid of *Tabernanthe iboga*, a shrub native to Central West Africa, which was traditionally used by indigenous cultures in rites of passage and healing ceremonies, as well as to combat fatigue, hunger and thirst.

Indeed, when taken in low quantities ibogaine is a psychostimulant, suppressing appetite and increasing feelings of euphoria, while high doses induce a trance-like state that can include visual and auditory hallucinations, ataxia and an altered perception of time.

Iboga rootbark is generally dried and ingested in thin strips, or ground into a powder. Semi-synthetic ibogaine was marketed in France in 1939 and was sold under the trade name Lambarène as a 'neuromuscular stimulant', for indications including fatigue, depression, and recovery from infectious illnesses. The first indication for ibogaine anti-addictive properties was at the early 1960's, where six out of seven addicts that ingested ibogaine lost their craving for heroin and experienced no withdrawal syndrome thereafter. However, in 1970, the federal government classified ibogaine as a Schedule I drug, which withhold further examinations of its therapeutic potential.

Even today there are no well-controlled clinical trials, but specialized clinics are providing anti-addiction treatments in several countries where the use is legal. Worldwide, it is estimated that about 10,000 individuals already underwent anti-addictive treatment using ibogaine, and the numbers continue to grow. Scientific research of that population found consistent evidence for a rapid resolution of opioid withdrawal symptoms, reduced cravings, and extended abstinence (up to several years in some cases). Moreover, a large study that included almost two-hundred opioid and cocaine dependent individuals found significant and long-lasting decreases not just for craving scores, but also for depression and anxiety scores. A different study found that ibogaine at doses used for opiate detoxification may lower blood pressure and heart rate when the drug reaches peak concentrations in blood.

These effects of ibogaine are experienced following a single oral dose, but many reported that they use small sub-psychedelic 'booster doses' after treatment, to alleviate residual withdrawal symptoms and to reduce craving.

Continued reading

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