

“TUSI” (PINK COCAINE)

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“Tusi” is the name given to a new synthetic drug combination that first emerged in the 2010s in Latin America and Europe and is becoming increasingly popular in the United States. The name is a play on “2C,” a group of psychedelic drugs common among clubgoers, which tusi is rarely found to contain. Also called “pink cocaine,” though it usually does not contain cocaine, it is a powder that is dyed with pink food coloring that smells of strawberries. It is typically snorted, pressed into pill form, or mixed with water (called “happy water”). According to the American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse, the majority of tusi drug checking samples contain [ketamine](#) in combination with other drugs, including MDMA, methamphetamine, opioids, cocaine, and/or new psychoactive substances (see LAPPA’s fact sheets on various [new psychoactive substances](#) for more information).

Tusi first appeared in the United States in late 2022 or early 2023. It first emerged on the “club scene,” and came to the attention of law enforcement in New York City in January 2023 when a man was arrested carrying a backpack containing 10 pounds of “pink cocaine” that was later determined to be pure ketamine. Just a few months later, the U.S. Coast Guard seized more than 140 pounds of tusi (and nearly 35,000 pounds of cocaine) while on deployment in the Pacific. Tusi is becoming prevalent in more jurisdictions and more well-known, thanks in part to the recent news that it is a favorite drug of Sean “Diddy” Combs. It has also been linked to a fatal car collision in Miami involving Instagram model Maecee Marie Lathers.



Due to the drug’s play on the name “2C,” dealers and users are unaware of what actually is in the substance they are selling or ingesting. 2C drugs have stimulant and psychedelic properties and generally cause users to experience euphoria, changes in perception, and slight hallucination. By contrast, ketamine, the primary ingredient in tusi, is a dissociative anesthetic. A Colombian report found that the effects of tusi use include euphoria, sedation, dizziness, vomiting, blacking out, and loss of consciousness. Additionally, it may cause agitation, high blood pressure, difficulty breathing, low body temperature, and seizures.

Because the drug is also known by the name “pink cocaine,” users may unwittingly believe that the drug contains cocaine and take it the same way they would cocaine leading to adverse

effects and, potentially, death. Additionally, each batch of tusi is unique and may contain varying amounts of different drugs, possibly even fentanyl. Therefore, it is impossible for individuals to know precisely what drug or drugs they are taking and in what amounts.

While tusi itself is not controlled under the federal Controlled Substances Act, the drugs that comprise tusi typically are. Ketamine is a Schedule III non-narcotic substance primarily used as an injectable, short-acting anesthetic in humans and animals. MDMA, also known as ecstasy, and DMT (dimethyltryptamine, a mind-altering substance in the hallucinogen family) are Schedule I controlled substances, meaning that they have a high potential for abuse, no currently accepted medical use in the United States, and a lack of accepted safety for use under medical supervision. Methamphetamine, oxycodone, and cocaine are Schedule II controlled substances, meaning that although they have a high potential for abuse, they also have a currently accepted medical use in the United States. Often, tusi contains additional substances that may also be scheduled. Possession of any Schedule I controlled substance is illegal in the United States, as is possession of any Schedule II – V controlled substance without a valid prescription.

CONCLUSION

Because tusi is new on the drug scene, not much is currently known about the effects of the drug on those who use it. People who use drugs should be aware of the dangers of using tusi due to confusion regarding the names by which it is known as well as the different drugs used to make it and should use harm reduction practices to prevent adverse effects from its use.

RESOURCES

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