



THEY CALL IT MOLLY

New drug called 'molly' is making a big name for itself at East, but what exactly are kids getting?

✪ written by Jack Howland | photos by Grant Kendall

About an hour had passed, but senior Alec Peterson* still didn't feel any different. He swallowed the bleach-white pill at the beginning of the concert with six of his friends and patiently waited through the opening act for something to kick. He had read online that it may take a couple hours or so to feel a high; he heard it may feel more subtle than alcohol or marijuana. But all Peterson could detect was a buzz. Nothing more, nothing less.

After two hours, he felt something. It was like somebody flipped a switch. Peterson noticed that every touch or brush against him felt "amazing." People looked more attractive. He felt like he had goosebumps that wouldn't go away. But Peterson, who in September got his first high from a drug sold by the name "molly," said the feeling could best be described as "blatantly happy."

"It was, like, intense," Peterson said. "I just felt happy. I don't even know how to explain it. It's not like being drunk or high [from marijuana]. You just are happy and you feel cool. You feel good — you really just feel good."

Molly, a street term given by the DEA to an alternative of Ecstasy called TFMPP, is among the newest drugs that has gained considerable name recognition at East. In a poll of 107 students, 43 percent say they're aware of the drug, 32 people in that group know someone that has done it and 9 percent have tried it. In October, The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) labeled it as a "chemical of concern" and reported it is most common among youth and young adults.

At East, Peterson points to "good old fashioned peer pressure," as the main reason it's on the rise.

"I had friends that had done it so that kinda opened me up to it," Peterson said. "So now that I have friends who have never done it, [they] maybe would be more open to it because I think it's a thing that you're definitely reassured that your peers are doing it too."

Barbara Carreno, a public affairs officer at the DEA, says that the main appeal for TFMPP is that it is legal in all 50 states. While there are some misconceptions that illegal substances are molly — like a pure form of Ecstasy called MDMA — the DEA says the actual drug is not a controlled chemical under the "Controlled Chemicals Act" and there are no legal repercussions for possessing it.

A website that provides comprehensive information about drugs on the street called Erowid claims that MDMA is synonymous with molly, but Carreno says that this shows how "people can sell something as whatever they want." She notes that a certain school or area can sell their product by any name they see fit — for instance, Peterson claims he was sold MDMA on both occasions he tried the drug.

But even by the DEAs definition of molly, Carreno points out, it's unsafe.

"Among other things, molly can slow your heart and breathing rates, impair your ability to move, and impair your body's ability to regulate its temperature," Carreno said. "Sometimes [this results] in dangerously high fevers, similar to ecstasy, which can cause fatally high temperatures that can't be reversed, leading to heart, liver and kidney failure."

Molly is also often mixed with a chemical called BZT to enhance its effects. BZT, more commonly referred to as Legal E or Legal X, is a controlled substance banned by law. Carreno often warns youth that with molly and any drug it's easy for a dealer to slip something else in or hand out something entirely different. The most important question for a buyer to ask, according to Carreno, is "what's in it for them?"

"Many suppliers want to make money at [teens'] expense and don't have [their] best interests — health, safety, success, happiness, good relationships, personal and social growth — at heart," Carreno said. "Sometimes they don't even know you; they are in business to make money for themselves."

Clinical addiction counselor Kevin Kufeldt from the Johnson County Mental Health Adolescent Center for Treatment said he has multiple drug dealers in session who have pawned off other substances as molly. For the most part, he sees a lot of kids selling capsulated bath salts — a more dangerous substitute for TFMPP. Kufeldt, whose job requires him to counsel troubled youth who have turned to dealing, notes that it would be surprising if pure form molly was surfacing around East.

According to Kufeldt, drug dealers from the Blue Valley School District have been known to pawn off black and blue gelatin capsules filled with bath salt as molly. He explains that they can buy and capsulize 14 grams of bath salt for around \$300 and sell all of it for around \$600 to \$700. Individually each pill will be priced around \$40. A lot of dealers even have a "hook-up" for cheaper prices so they can turn a bigger profit.

"Money is a driving motivator for a lot of these kids," Kufeldt said. "Because in order to finance their own drug use, they need money; so they're pushing [bath salts] off to people who are unexpectedly taking something they're not aware of."

He explains that while kids who get molly may expect a "heightened sense of euphoria," bath salts give a much different sensation. He points out that the salt of choice, "Pump-It," can create hallucinogenic feelings. Like alcohol, it can make someone black out or not feel cognizant of what they're saying. It may make healthy people entertain the idea of committing suicide. And the reason that it has this effect, Kufeldt said, is because it causes a lack of sleep.

"If you have someone who has been sleep deprived for three days, the brain starts to play tricks on you," Kufeldt said. "You can tie it back to military-type interrogation stuff where they'll keep someone in custody awake for several days — it's kind of like that type of deal where they almost become delirious."

Kufeldt, who meets with teens in session four days a week, says that he's spoken with kids that have dealt capsulated bath salts as molly in the Shawnee Mission School District. He explains that the Blue Valley District and around Rockhurst make up a lot of the area where he typically runs into bath salts. Kids, he said, will lie and sell their product as molly because students typically are hesitant to try something filled with "Pump-It."

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