



The Psychedelic Mushroom Experiment

Colorado and Oregon are leading the way.

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Colorado regulators are issuing licenses for providing psychedelic mushrooms and are planning to authorize the state's first "healing centers," where the mushrooms can be ingested under supervision, in late spring or early summer.

The dawn of state-regulated psychedelic mushrooms has arrived in Colorado, nearly two years since Oregon began offering them. The mushrooms are a Schedule I drug and illegal under federal law except for clinical research. But more than a dozen cities nationwide have deprioritized or decriminalized them in the past five years, and many eyes are turned toward Oregon's and Colorado's state-regulated programs.

"In Oregon and Colorado, we're going to learn a lot about administration of psychedelics outside of clinical, religious and underground settings because they're the first to try this in the U.S.," says William R. Smith, MD, PhD, an assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine.

Psychedelic mushrooms and their psychoactive compound, psilocybin, have the potential to treat people with depression and anxiety, including those unresponsive to other medications or therapy. The National Institute on Drug Abuse, part of the National Institutes of Health, says the risk of mental health problems caused by ingesting mushrooms in a supervised clinical setting is low but may be higher outside of a clinical setting. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said in a social media post in 2024, before his nomination as U.S. health secretary, that his "mind is open to the idea of psychedelics for treatment."

Medical experts say more research is needed, particularly in people with a diagnosis or family history of psychotic or bipolar disorder. Adverse effects of psilocybin, including headache and nausea, typically resolve within one to two days. However, extended difficulties from using psychedelics can last weeks, months or years; anxiety and fear, existential struggle, social disconnection and feeling detached from oneself and one's surroundings are most common. After the decriminalization and legalization in Oregon and Colorado, psychedelic mushroom exposures

reported to poison control centers ticked up in these states and nationally.

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