

The Ayahuasca Health Guide

A community-created safety resource brought to you by the Ethnobotanical Stewardship Council and partners

Version 0.4: Second revision based on public comments

About this Guide: The Ayahuasca Health Guide is a response to the need for a free, easy to use, community-vetted, and accessible source of up-to-date information on health and safety relating to ayahuasca, and on how to reduce safety risks. Sections are tailored both to seekers and to those holding ceremonies.

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Background: The ESC is facilitating the development of this guide in consultation with Plantaforma, UMIYAC, ICEERS and others who have already done much to lead the way to safer ayahuasca use.

Guide Development Process: This version is the first draft for public comments. The Guide will be developed in two public consultation stages:

1. The pilot draft of the Ayahuasca Health Guide will be developed through public participation and consultation, starting with a presentation and comment period at the 2014 World Ayahuasca Conference in Ibiza on September 27th 2014, followed by a 60-day public consultation process following the [ISEAL Code of Good Practice](#), where the Guide will be hosted on its own website and all interested persons can make suggestions and comments. The ESC will read all suggestions and comments, feed back on the issues raised, and integrate changes accordingly. For instance, if we receive information about specific, regularly occurring dangerous practices, and if measures to avoid these have not been outlined in the Health Guide, we will constructively work to identify and include safer alternative practices, which the public can then feed back on. When all suggestions have been integrated we will see if consensus has been reached on the document. Consensus is defined as general agreement, characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any significant portion of the concerned interests (such as indigenous groups, ayahuasca centers, policy makers, activists or researchers). If consensus is not reached, the ESC will hold another 60-day public consultation and comment period.
2. The final draft of the Ayahuasca Health Guide will be integrated into public consultations during the Ayahuasca Dialogues in late 2015. The Ayahuasca Dialogues will aim to define good practices for the safe use and sustainability of ayahuasca (ultimately leading to the Ayahuasca Agreement).

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Disclaimer: All material is accurate at the time of writing. The aims of this document are to help people to make responsible decisions, reduce risks and maximize potential benefits. However, the ESC and partners cannot be held legally responsible for any adverse effects experienced. Ayahuasca is illegal or has restricted legality in several countries; we cannot condone illegal activities.

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I. Known Ayahuasca Health and Safety Risks

Ayahuasca is an ancient traditional medicine and must be approached with respect. Although scientists have a growing knowledge of ayahuasca, indigenous and traditional knowledge holders remain the real experts in using ayahuasca to heal or alleviate a diversity of health conditions. Therefore, respect for this medicine and the peoples who work with it is the first step to improving safety, including making responsible decisions that reduce risks and maximize potential benefits. Ritual use of the plant with trained and experienced knowledge holders is key to safety. From a scientific perspective, ayahuasca is broadly safe. However there are certain pre-existing conditions, diet and medicinal interactions, as well as environmental and ceremonial factors which may increase health risks.

Health Risks

Ayahuasca has been found to be fundamentally safe by a large number of scientific studies (for example: McKenna, 2004; Gable, 2007; Bouso & Riba, 2011; Barbosa et al., 2012; dos Santos, 2013a and b). However, these analyses have also identified certain circumstances in which it should either not be used, or be used with care. Examples include if you: have a serious cardiovascular condition; a personal or family history of psychiatric disorders; are taking certain medicines (including herbal medicines), or have recently been eating certain foods.

Cardiovascular:

If you have a *serious cardiovascular condition*¹, you should not take ayahuasca. Studies have found that ayahuasca increases both blood pressure and heart rate. In healthy people and people with mild cases of high and low blood pressure this should not pose significant problems, except theoretically for those performing physical exercise (e.g. dancing) and/or older people. Thus, care and awareness of your own body are important, as well as informing the ayahuasca center, practitioner, or group of your condition, if you have one.

Psychological:

If you have a personal or family history of psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, psychosis, personality disorders, or bipolar disorder, among others, taking ayahuasca can involve a high risk, especially if your disorder is active (Johnson, Richards & Griffiths 2008). It is very important to openly discuss such issues with the practitioner. Asking about the practitioner's previous experience in holding ceremonies

¹ A list of heart conditions is available here: <http://www.world-heart-federation.org/cardiovascular-health/heart-disease/different-heart-diseases/>

with people with similar conditions, or asking to be introduced to people with similar conditions who have worked with the practitioner, could help understand risks and potential benefits, and provide information on the capability of the practitioner. Some practitioners may admit you to their sessions if you tell them you have a history of mental disorders, and others may not. The important thing is not whether you are being admitted or not, but making sure the admission is made with conscious responsibility and getting the assurance that, whatever happens, you will be taken good care of, prior to, during, and after the ceremony. This may take the form of properly screening before participation, being mindful of safety during the ceremony and helping to integrate experiences following the ceremony, advising further counseling, if needed. There are people with histories of mental disorders that have done well after taking ayahuasca, but there are also others in which symptoms have re-emerged. It is therefore very important to take that risk into account, choose well with whom you are going to take ayahuasca, and to be sincere and honest about your medical history. The sincerity of the practitioner regarding your well-being is also very important. If you don't perceive this sincerity, and this also counts for people without a history of mental disorders, it is wise not to take ayahuasca with this person.

Interactions with medications and other substances, including herbal medicines:

It is extremely important to consult a doctor, ideally your own doctor, if you have been taking medications (particularly long-term medication) and plan to take ayahuasca, so that they can advise you on potential interactions. Antidepressants, and drugs used for treating hepatic, neurological, and cardiovascular dysfunctions are all thought to have the potential to interact with ayahuasca.

If you have a chronic illness, it can be potentially dangerous to stop taking the medication for periods of time, even with the intent to take ayahuasca. It is very important to consult a specialist. In any case, always carry the medication with you, even if you will only be away from home for a few hours. Ayahuasca ceremonies are often held in places that are far from urban centers, which are sometimes difficult to access. If for any reason you cannot return home on time, not having your medication with you can become a problem.

Ayahuasca, antidepressants and other serotonergic² medicines:

The interaction of ayahuasca with antidepressants, and other medicines with effects on serotonin levels, are topics which require further research. However, it is thought that the combination of monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), such as the beta-carbolines in ayahuasca, with substances that have an effect on serotonin and/or monoamine oxidase levels **could** lead to serotonin syndrome, which has the potential to be fatal³ (Boyer & Shannon 2005). In practice, however, this risk appears to be low, largely due to the short-acting and reversible nature of the MAOIs in ayahuasca. Nevertheless, awareness is important. Antidepressants, especially SSRIs (e.g. fluoxetine, paroxetine) are often listed by ayahuasca centers as medicines that one cannot take during an ayahuasca session, and an abstinence period of two to six weeks is suggested. On the other hand, the União do Vegetal (a Brazilian ayahuasca church) have found through long-term observation that a more flexible approach can be taken. They recommend that:

² Medicines that have an effect on serotonin levels.

³ Serotonin syndrome occurs when the body contains excess serotonin. Its symptoms include shivering, headache, sweating, increased heart rate, tremors, confusion, agitation, nausea and vomiting.

- Newcomers who are about to drink ayahuasca for the first time, and who are using serotonergic medicines, shall be given reduced quantities of ayahuasca in their first sessions;
- People who have already been regularly drinking ayahuasca for some time and who start to use serotonergic medicines shall reduce ayahuasca ingestion temporarily as their treatment begins.

Broadly, the safest approach is to avoid taking serotonergic medicines in conjunction with ayahuasca (dos Santos 2013b; Brown 2010). However, when considering withdrawing from these medicines it is important to consider potential difficulties and to focus first and foremost on self-care. Withdrawal reactions can occur with all major types of antidepressants, and are more likely to occur if medication is suddenly stopped, or if you have been taking the medication for a long time. Some people experience little to no withdrawal symptoms, while others experience extremely unpleasant withdrawal symptoms and must reduce their dose very slowly over a long period of time. Symptoms can include gastric problems, general discomfort, mood changes and extreme restlessness⁴. It is important to weigh the potential benefits of taking ayahuasca against the potential difficulties of withdrawing from medication.

Medications metabolized by cytochrome isoform (CYP2D6) such as antidepressants, tricyclic antidepressants, serotonin reuptake inhibitors, perphenazine, neuroleptics, beta-blockers, and antiarrhythmics may also prove dangerous in combination with ayahuasca, as CYP2D6 blocks the metabolic pathway needed to rid the body of serotonin. It has also been found that some populations have a genetically-linked weakened CYP2D6 pathway, making those persons more susceptible to serotonin toxicity (Brierley & Davidson 2012; Brown 2010). African-Americans and white populations have been found to have weaker CYP2D6 pathways, while Asian, Middle Eastern and North African populations tend to have stronger CYP2D6 pathways.

Ayahuasca and other substances, including herbal medicines:

Other substances which could increase the risk of serotonin syndrome when taken in combination with ayahuasca include ginseng (*Panax* sp.), St John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), dextromethorphan (DXM), amphetamines, and 3,4- methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA, or ecstasy), therefore it is recommended that these should be avoided (dos Santos 2013b; Brown 2010).

Additionally, ayahuasca is likely to produce interactions with psilocybin, mescaline, and cannabis. It would likely increase the actions of psilocybin and mescaline, which may also increase the risk of serotonin syndrome. In the case of cannabis, the main potential risks are hypothesized as being the occurrence of cardiac problems, anxiety and panic reactions, and also psychotic reactions (see Guimarães dos Santos, 2011). Therefore, those with a personal or family history of psychotic symptoms are particularly advised not to combine ayahuasca and cannabis.

Dietary interactions:

Tyramine is a monoamine that is naturally present in some foods. Monoamines are broken down by monoamine oxidase, so when monoamine oxidase is inhibited and foods rich in tyramine are eaten, the tyramine could, theoretically, build up to levels which may lead to a hypertensive crisis (dos Santos 2013b). A hypertensive crisis is a rapid and severe increase in blood pressure which can lead to organ

⁴ Further information on harm reduction when coming off antidepressants is available online, for instance via [MIND](#). A thoughtful guide to harm reduction, and the pros and cons of coming off psychiatric drugs is also available [here](#).

damage. Symptoms include headache, nausea, vomiting, sweating, increased heart rate, dilated pupils and, very infrequently, brain haemorrhage and death.

However, the MAOIs in ayahuasca are believed to be very short acting, reversible, and disappear from the body very quickly, unlike many of the MAOIs prescribed as antidepressants, which are often irreversible in their effects, and therefore have stringent food restrictions associated with them in order to prevent hypertensive crisis, referred to as the “tyramine diet”. Consequently, when taking ayahuasca it is less likely that tyramine levels would build up dangerously, but it is still safest to avoid food with high concentrations of tyramine for at least 12 hours both before and after the session. Above all, fermented products such as aged cheeses, soy sauce, wine or beer, and certain meats and nuts are rich in tyramine (dos Santos 2013a). (You can find comprehensive lists of products that are rich in tyramine on the Internet, for instance here: <http://www.ayahuasca.com/information-discussion/foods-and-meds-to-avoid-with-maois>.) Although it is very unlikely you would ingest such foods while under the influence of ayahuasca, we also recommend that you do not do this. Anecdotal evidence suggests that although food interactions are highly unlikely to be fatal, they may cause severe headaches and accelerated heart rates, and may increase the risk of panic attacks. There are many important parallels between a low-tyramine diet and the *dietas* followed in the Northwestern Amazon as preparation for ayahuasca sessions.

Safety Risks:

The vast majority of genuine ayahuasca practitioners are extremely professional and have exemplary conduct, which is itself a product of the cosmivision of ayahuasca. A huge number of people benefit from their actions, and the situations covered below are not the norm. However, some people do find themselves in difficult scenarios, therefore the intention of the advice below is to help raise awareness, and to help seekers feel more capable of coping with situations if they do happen to arise.

Ceremony Leaders

Although these incidents are, on the whole, rare, there have been numerous reports of sexual assault, rape, beatings and robberies, attributed to “fake” ceremony leaders who are thought to be abusing the naivety of the western seeker (Hearn, 2013; Guerra, 2010). The most important method to reduce this risk is for the participant to do thorough research on the center and/or ceremony leader prior to attendance, ideally seeking opinions and advice from trusted and experienced people. Another additional option is for the participant to bring a friend who can sit, sober, for the duration of the ceremony.

Other risks may be more psychological, rather than physical, as the phenomenology of the ayahuasca experience is deeply personal in nature (Trichter, 2010) and participants can find themselves in a highly impressionable state. There is a risk of leaders misinterpreting participants’ visions in a way that could undermine a more therapeutic interpretation by the participant themselves. Ceremony participants must keep this possibility in mind and prepare themselves for the need to listen to their own interpretations, or the healthier of the two.

Some ayahuasca drinkers find themselves attracted to ceremony leaders, and vice versa. Although drinking ayahuasca can be a highly sensual experience, and some ceremony leaders and participants do end up in meaningful relationships, it is strongly advised not to engage in a physical relationship before, during, or for several weeks after a ceremony as doing so may interfere with personal healing.

Women's Safety and Resources

Some issues for female travelers to keep in mind when attending ceremony in the Amazon include menstruation, pregnancy and lactation, and safety from sexual attack. There are different cultural paradigms relating to the use of ayahuasca by women, mostly concerning women who are menstruating. Menstruation is seen by some practitioners as being a source of energies which might interfere with ceremony. Different tribes, centers, and practitioners will likely differ in levels of comfort in holding ceremony with menstruating women, or even women in general. Some practitioners may have methodologies in place in order to allow participation by menstruating women, such as blowing tobacco smoke over the woman's body, prior to ceremony (Beyer, 2008). It is recommended that female travelers inquire about the methodologies and viewpoints of practitioners prior to arrival, in order to be congruent with the practitioners' chosen ideals and practices. If taking oral contraceptives it may be possible to delay menstruation by continuing straight on to your next set of pills, avoiding pill-free days.

Scientific research concerning the use of ayahuasca while pregnant is lacking. However, culturally, there are modalities used for this special population, suggesting that using ayahuasca while pregnant may not be harmful. It is believed that consuming ayahuasca while pregnant brings power to the unborn child (Beyer, 2008). The dosage given is much smaller, and the frequency of usage lessened for this purpose (Labate, 2011).

Though it may be culturally accepted for women to drink while pregnant, there is a diversity of opinion on ayahuasca and breast feeding. The mestizo ayahuasquera doña María Tuesta believes it is dangerous for women who are lactating to drink (Beyer, 2008). There is little to no scientific evidence on the subject of breast feeding and ayahuasca, but anecdotal evidence suggests that it may be safe. Nevertheless, if you are pregnant or breast feeding, you should always inform the ceremony leaders prior to participation and be aware that scientific research concerning possible harm is lacking.

Finally, it is recommended that women do not travel alone, due to a higher level of vulnerability to sexual attack. This is advice not only for ceremony, where each user is recommended to bring a sober friend due to the common experience of paralysis, but in general. Anecdotal reports suggest that solo female travelers are more likely to be attacked than those traveling with another person.

II. Visitor Responsibilities

- i. **Read part 1 of the Guide**, which should help you to understand the potential health risks, and take steps to minimize these risks, including informing ceremony leaders of your medical history. It is also wise to do your own research if you think that taking ayahuasca may be a risk to your health, e.g. by talking to a health practitioner.
- ii. **Do your own research concerning the center, and or practitioner(s), prior to attendance**, such as getting references from others, finding out who may have a bad reputation, and/or bringing a friend who can sit sober to reduce the risk of being taken advantage of, or harmed. Trust your intuition when something does not feel right.
- iii. **Do your own research on the region you are visiting** in order to be culturally aware/appropriate.
- iv. **Understand potential safety hazards** present on site, and the steps that have been taken to reduce the associated risks. These hazards might include things that you could fall off, or over, or down like walls, stairs, ladders, raised areas, steep slopes, and stream or river banks. Farming or construction equipment, such as machetes, may also pose a hazard.
- v. **Be clear in your intentions** as to why you are taking ayahuasca, and what you hope to gain from the experience.
- vi. **Have an exit plan**: Know how to leave if you need to, for personal or medical reasons.
- vii. **Travel with a friend** or loved one if possible. Taking ayahuasca could be one of the most profound experiences of your life.
- viii. **'Know your Brew'**: To understand the contents and origins of the brew, except in the case of proprietary brews that have a record of safe use. Brews should not contain levels of toé (*Brugmansia* sp.) or other substances sufficient to lead to incapacitation.
- ix. **'Know your Shaman'**: The visitor has the right to know and talk to the practitioner (including being provided with translation if necessary). There are many different classes of practitioners advertising ceremonies, from indigenous and mestizo curanderos who have followed traditional initiation and rituals, including proper diets in order to commune with numerous plant spirits, over many years' time; those whose work is mostly focused on ayahuasca, known as *ayahuasqueros*; as well as those who have very little training, in comparison, as schools of shamanism are becoming increasingly popular. Traditionally, practitioners are judged based on the recency, frequency, and length of *dietas*, or plant diets, as this is what gives them direct experience of the plants themselves, and how to use them. There is a general consensus that one must train for 4 to 5 years, minimum, in order to master ayahuasca, becoming an *ayahuasquero*. Further training is required in order to work with a wider variety of plant medicines. Ask about your practitioner's training and background, prior to sitting in ceremony with them.
- x. **Know the rules of the ceremony**: Every responsible ayahuasca center and/or practitioner should inform participants of the rules, conduct and safety of ceremony before the ceremony begins. If the practitioner or center does not provide this information, then this may well be an early sign

of a lack of safety. Staying until the closure of ceremony is a fundamental element in safety - unless a medical emergency happens - both due to its psychological importance and to ensure physical safety. Participants may experience strong journeys that involve temporary changes in consciousness, at times this can cause difficulties in performing certain physical tasks, which could result in them hurting themselves if they leave in the middle of a ceremony. Traditionally the closure of the ceremony is also seen as important as it seals the energetic field and helps to prevent bad spirits from entering participants' bodies.

III. Responsibilities of Sites, Centers and Organizers

The measures outlined below are entirely voluntary. Eventually, some of these may be included as safety elements in the Ayahuasca Agreement. These measures are shared in the spirit of making best practices accessible and available to all. There are two levels of advice: 'essential' and 'best practice'. 'Essential' advice is required to ensure safety, which 'best practice' encourages safety.

- i. **Safety Management System:** The center or site should have a written safety management system to identify hazards and minimize potential risk to visitors. All community members or staff at centers should be trained in the safety management system, including:
 - i. **Ceremony safety:**
 - i. **Essential:** Preparation of ceremony site, including physical removal of hazards. **Best practice:** Providing safety items, such as a bucket of water to extinguish fires. Providing comfort or convenience items, such as buckets, soft seating, water, tissues.
 - ii. **Essential:** Participants should be screened prior to allowing them to sit in ceremony. At intake the following medical topics should be covered: current and recent medication (including all substances which might interact with ayahuasca), pre-existing conditions, past conditions, and family history of certain conditions. Participants must be informed of the risks of not following safety protocol, and must give informed consent.
 - iii. **Essential:** Preparation for ceremonies by ceremony leader to maximize the spiritual and psychological safety of visitors: discussion of the participants' expectations and intentions for the ceremony; informing participants of proper conduct during ceremony; managing expectations prior to ceremony; advising participants about the powerful visionary nature of the brew and how to best navigate this, and discussing the integration of the experience following ceremony.
 - iv. **Essential:** The ayahuasca brew should be tested for safety prior to offering to participants, and the dosage of the brew should be titrated, so that seekers are not being given more than they can handle. It is suggested that the leader of ceremony start small and give more of the brew, as needed. Admixtures of concern should be disclosed to clients. The use of *toé* and *chiric sanango* should always be disclosed to participants, if not avoided altogether. The only excep-

tions to this rule are proprietary blends with proven safety records, when used by experienced practitioners who test them beforehand.

- v. **Best practice:** Limit the number of clients per ceremony/per practitioner: Practically, this should be the number of participants that the leader of the ceremony will be able to watch over for any adverse effects.
- vi. **Best practice:** Have at least one (ideally) sober (or low dosed) observer/helper, available throughout the ceremony to help participants (e.g. if they need to travel to the toilet); to keep an eye on the setting; make sure people do not wander off unattended; deal efficiently with any emergencies, and be aware of warning signs of adverse effects for participants. Although every ceremony is different, it is recommended to have at least two helpers when the group number reaches ten people, so that one can accompany a participant to the bathroom, but there will always be someone in ceremony with the practitioner in case needed.
- vii. **Essential:** Follow-up with participants, such as group discussions or one-on-one consultations the day after the ceremony, in order to check in and see whether further counseling would be advised, and to help participants better integrate the experience.
- viii. **Best practice:** Have measures in place for specific populations marketed to, e.g. those with PTSD. Have counselors on hand who are trained in these areas. If possible, follow-up with some of your participants who have presented more complex psychological or spiritual situations at least a week to 10 days after the work has been done - since the intensity of the work with ayahuasca opens channels of profound change and the effects and impacts often continue over the following days.

ii. Site safety hazard assessment and risk mitigation:

- i. **Essential:** A site hazard checklist and risk mitigation plan, also known as a risk assessment. This is an assessment of the different hazards present, and a log of the steps being taken to minimize the risks posed by those hazards. Hazards might include the potential of falling, snake bites, visitors getting lost, etc. A template for recording the results of a risk assessment is included in the appendix. When conducting a risk assessment consideration needs to be taken of what might cause harm and how, and the people who might be affected. You should also take into account any mitigation efforts which are already in place and identify what, if any, further actions are required.
- ii. **Essential:** An accident and safety log must be kept, including the cause of incidents, and remediation (risk abatement) measures, which must be available to visitors upon request. A template accident log is included in the appendix.
- iii. **Essential:** Acute health crisis preparedness: A clear, pre-existing plan of how to get to the nearest hospital, the length of time required to travel there, and methods of ensuring the availability of transport.

- iv. **Essential:** First aid preparedness. Can be western and/or traditional place-based first aid. Snake bite anti-venom and antihistamines are especially important.
- v. **Essential:** It is the responsibility of the center to collect, log and address any potential grievances.

IV. Practitioner Responsibilities

As an Ayahuasca Health Guide, it is important to note that the indigenous health system is based on the balance and harmony of life, from within oneself, to the cosmos, and everything in between. Ayahuasca is a maestro plant that helps to guide and illuminate this balance and harmony. Currently, this Ayahuasca Health Guide focuses on the theme of the offering and drinking of ayahuasca between the *ayahuasquero* and the seeker, yet through dialogues it could arrive at including a broader scope of the indigenous perspective of health in reference to ayahuasca.

For those who administer ayahuasca, especially to people who are not from the Amazonian indigenous culture, the following guidelines are suggested:

- First, to consult, know and respect the local laws and rights relating to the use of ayahuasca established by the local governing body, and the curandero/shaman organization that one is affiliated to (if affiliated), and to implement them transparently and ethically. Concurrently, one should also be educated in the regional and provincial laws and rights, in order to be able to uphold to them. It is also important to familiarize oneself with Convention 169 (C169) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to understand your rights in offering and working in the native practice of indigenous ceremonial/healing work. (<http://www.ilo.org/indigenous/Conventions/no169/lang--en/index.htm>).
- Communicate the sacredness of the plants – the cosmovision of ayahuasca. Ensure there is a mutual understanding and respect of the divinity of the rituals.
- International seekers have approached *curanderos/yachaks* with various ailments, sometimes with medical diagnoses unfamiliar to the Amazonian culture. As such, one should also familiarize oneself with the health risks included in this guide for seekers.
- Be aware of the responsibilities of sites, centers and organizers included in this guide (see Section III).
- As ayahuasca is a plant to 'cure,' approach each ayahuasca seeker as a patient seeking 'health.' Diagnose properly and thoroughly and make suggestions accordingly to the seeker for their personal healing, keeping in mind that ayahuasca may not be the first 'cure' appropriate for the individual. Time must be designated for the proper 'cure.'
- Enforce strict *dieta* before and after ceremony, though there may be distinctions between the necessary and the recommended elements of *dieta*. Refer the seeker to the ESC dietary interactions, as international seekers may have different diets - for instance they may be more likely to eat foods such as aged cheeses or yeast extract, found to be extremely incompatible before or after an ayahuasca ceremony.

- Offer a process of integration. International seekers typically come from cultures that lack a profound understanding of symbols and visions or dreams. Therefore, it is essential to support the seeker in coming to an understanding of their experience. Note: ensure communication is not a barrier. Drawings may be used to help communicate visions to the *ayahuasquero*, among many other alternatives.

- For the comfort of a female seeker, a prepared female assistant must attend the ceremony.

- Although some ceremony leaders and participants do end up in meaningful relationships, it is strongly advised not to engage in a physical relationship with a participant before, during, or for several weeks after a ceremony, as doing so may interfere with the participant's healing.

Remember the ceremony offered represents an insight into the millennial knowledge of the indigenous Amazonian people for international seekers. As such, ensure all intentions and practice are transparent and ethical.

Note: For the first time in history, international ayahuasca health guidelines are being constructed for practitioners based on consensual feedback, and this will obviously require more outreach to key governing bodies of the indigenous territories, organizations, federations and individuals. The ESC is currently engaged in this process in order to ensure that the information contained here is the best possible and is widely agreed upon, with the agenda of organizing more roundtable discussions and visits to key stakeholders to develop the above ideas. In the meantime, public comments are most appreciated.

The ESC also references the Hippocratic Oath for Psychoactive Plant Medicine Practitioners (developed by ICEERS). ICEERS are concurrently receiving comments on the development of this document and the ESC encourages your feedback: [\[Insert link\]](#)

V. Appendix (Document Templates)

- Simple liability waiver: template
- Simple risk assessment form: template
- Simple accident log: template

VI. Explanatory Notes:

The Ayahuasca Health Guide is open source and can be used in whole or in part by anyone. It is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License**, meaning you are free to: Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format; or to adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. However, you must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. For more information, please follow this link: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

The Ayahuasca Health Guide can be used voluntarily by any center, community, practitioner, individual or other entity. However, the ESC cannot **recognize** self claims by any entity to be implementing this agreement. In late 2015, essential elements of this Health Guide will be integrated into the Ayahuasca Agreement. *Only those centers or sites that wish to be assured to the Ayahuasca Agreement can be recognized by the ESC as implementing this Health Guide.* Claims that entities have implemented this Guide will be based on rigorous oversight of those sites, based on assurance mechanisms and processes established during the Ayahuasca Dialogues. Some examples of assurance mechanisms include: independent spot checks, visitor feedback, mystery shoppers, and verification of disclosed data. No other entity is, or ever will be, strictly required to implement this Guide.

These guidelines should remain freely available. This is the first version of the Ayahuasca Health Guide. Scientific elements will be updated every six months by ICEERS. The ESC gratefully receives feedback and will use it as a basis upon which to improve the Guide in future. Our aim is to share best practices, and make it easier for people to use and implement them through training and other forms of capacity building.

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