

AMPHETAMINES

Amphetamines are powerful stimulant drugs that increase activity in the central nervous system. Their effect is similar to that of adrenaline, one of the body's own hormones. Even though amphetamines mimic the effects of adrenaline, they act for a much longer time in the body.



Amphetamines can be acquired legally by prescription, although their medical uses are limited. They are used today to treat childhood hyperactivity, obesity, and narcolepsy, a rare disorder in which persons are overcome by sudden attacks of deep sleep.

Slang Terms

➤ A	➤ Dexies	➤ Whiz
➤ Amp	➤ Speed	➤ Black
➤ Bennies	➤ Sulphate	➤ Beauties
➤ Billy	➤ Uppers	➤ Cross-tops
➤ Ice	➤ Crank	➤ Whites
		➤ Crystal

Amphetamines are man-made chemicals. As a group they comprise of many legal synthetic compounds. These include amphetamine (Benzedrine, Preludin), methamphetamine (Desoxyn, Methedrine), dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine), methylphenidate (Ritalin), pemoline (Cylert), phenylpropanolamine (AcuTrim), Ephedrine, and Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed). Amphetamines also include illegal compounds such as MDMA or MDA

(Ecstasy) and Dextro-methamphetamine (Ice).

As a result of tighter controls placed on amphetamines, many illegal labs manufacture and sell homemade amphetamines. "Quasi-legal" fake amphetamines can also be found on the illicit drug market. It has become virtually impossible for a drug user to know if a capsule is genuine, homemade or a fake.

"Look-alike drugs" are tablets or capsules that are made to look like real amphetamines and roughly imitate their effects. They usually contain varying amounts of legal substances and are often purposed by sellers to be authentic.

Methamphetamine is the most potent form of amphetamine readily available with or without a prescription. Almost all methamphetamine is homemade and resembles a fine coarse powder, crystal or chunks. Its color varies from off-white to yellow. It is taken into the body by swallowing, snorting or injecting intravenously.

"Crystal" Methamphetamine is used as a replacement for cocaine or mixed with heroin. It is similar to cocaine in its euphoric effects, but longer lasting. Crystal is sold as a powder that is injected, inhaled or taken orally.

"Ice" or "Glass" is a concentrated form of methamphetamine that resembles tiny chunks of translucent glass. It is a more potent form of crystal methamphetamine that can be "smoked" rather than injected.

Physical/Physiological Effects

The effects of any drug depend on several factors - the amount taken at one time; the user's past drug experience; the manner in which the drug is taken; and the circumstances under which the drug is taken (the place, the user's psychological and emotional stability, the presence of other people, the simultaneous use of alcohol and other drugs, etc.). The effects of amphetamines also depend on the dosage that is taken.

Used properly, and under the care of a medical doctor, amphetamines cause only minor adverse side effects. Used improperly, the abuse of amphetamines and its derivatives can have life-long, life-threatening effects.

<i>Physiological Effects</i>
➤ Increased alertness
➤ Increased talkativeness
➤ Positive mood shift, sense of well-being
➤ Reduced appetite
➤ Loss of coordination
➤ Restlessness
➤ Convulsions
➤ Insomnia
➤ Irregular heartbeat
➤ Psychotic episodes

Amphetamines are psychologically and physically addictive. Psychological dependence exists when the drug is so central to a person's thoughts, emotions and activities that the need to continue its use becomes a craving or compulsion. Users feel that the drug is essential to their normal functioning. Physical dependence occurs when the body has adapted to the presence of the drug and withdrawal symptoms occur if

its use is stopped abruptly. They continue to use the drug to avoid the "down" feeling they often experience when the drug's effects wear off. In addition, users of amphetamines usually develop tolerance, a need to take larger doses to get the same initial effect.

Users of large amounts of amphetamines can lead to malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies, skin disorders, ulcers, lack of sleep, weight loss and depression. Frequent use of large amounts of amphetamines can cause brain damage that results in speech and thought disturbances.

In addition to the physical effects of amphetamines, users report feeling restless, anxious and moody. Increased doses intensify the effects and users may become excited or talkative and experience a false sense of self-confidence or superiority. They may behave in a bizarre manner and some become aggressive and hostile.

Users of large amounts of amphetamines over a long period of time can develop an amphetamine psychosis, which is a mental disorder similar to paranoid schizophrenia. This psychosis is manifested by hallucinations, delusions, and paranoia. Those with amphetamine psychosis exhibit bizarre, sometime violent, behavior.

Withdrawal and Treatment

Amphetamines have the potential to produce tolerance, which means that increased amounts of the drugs are needed to achieve the desired effects. Withdrawal symptoms can occur when use of the amphetamines is stopped

abruptly. Users may experience fatigue, long disturbed periods of sleep, irritability, intense hunger, and moderate to severe depression. The length and severity of the depression is related to how much and how often amphetamines were used.

Withdrawal Symptoms

- Craving
- Exhaustion
- Depression
- Mental confusion
- Restlessness
- Insomnia
- Deep or disturbed sleep
- Extreme hunger
- Psychotic reaction
- Anxiety reactions

The most effective treatment of amphetamine addiction is cognitive behavior interventions. They are designed to help modify the patient's thinking, expectancies, and behaviors, and to increase skills in coping with various life stressors. Medical treatments include the treating of the physical and psychological aspects of craving.