

Facts About:

Amphetamines

What are amphetamines?

The amphetamines (uppers, bennies, pep pills) are a group of artificial stimulants. The original drug is called amphetamine, but the group includes dextroamphetamine (dexies), methamphetamine (speed, crystal, meth, crank), and smokable *methamphetamine* (ice, tina, jib, glass). These drugs all have similar effects. Even experienced users may be unable to tell which drug they have taken. These drugs come in tablets and capsules that can be taken orally. They can also appear as yellow, brown, pink, or off-white crystals, chunks and powders, which may be sniffed or injected. Smokable methamphetamine looks like shaved glass slivers or clear rock salt.

Amphetamines may be prescribed for narcolepsy (attacks of uncontrollable sleepiness) and hyperactivity. However, they are no longer used medically to treat depression and obesity because of their dangerous side effects. ***Amphetamines increase alertness, energy, and a sense of wellbeing.*** Amphetamines have been used or abused illicitly by truck drivers, shift workers, students, athletes and bodybuilders. Possessing, manufacturing, trafficking, and prescription shopping for amphetamines is a serious offence, and can result in fines, prison sentences and a criminal record.

Some methamphetamine users repeatedly take the drug over several days in order to maintain the *euphoria*. These binges or “runs” often continue even when agitation and frightening hallucinations replace the feelings of exhilaration.

Short-term Effects

Small doses of amphetamines can make you feel alert and energetic. They can increase your breathing and heart rates, decrease your appetite, and dilate your pupils. They can cause a dry mouth and sleeping problems. At higher doses, you can experience euphoria. Smoking and injecting amphetamines can produce an extremely pleasurable *rush* or “flash” that lasts a few minutes. Side effects include:

- Restlessness,
- Shakiness,
- Sweating,
- Anxiety,
- Headache,
- Blurred vision,
- Dizziness,
- Irregular heartbeat, and
- Chest pain.

Some users experience feelings of power and superiority. Some become hostile and aggressive. Overdose can cause delusions, hallucinations, high fever, delirium, seizures, coma, stroke, heart failure and death. Use with alcohol and other drugs are especially dangerous.

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Other Risks

Amphetamine users who inject the drug with *shared needles* risk getting hepatitis and AIDS. Injected particles such as filler chemicals, which do not dissolve in water, will damage blood vessels, kidneys, lungs, and brain tissue. Even using large amounts of pharmaceutical grade amphetamines may be harmful to the users.

Long-Term Effects

If you use amphetamines regularly, you can have chronic sleep problems, mood swings, irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure, weight loss, constipation or diarrhea, and nutritional problems. High doses of the drug can result in nerve damage, chronic psychosis, paranoia, and hallucinations. Most of these problems disappear a few days or weeks after drug use stops. There is evidence however, that *methamphetamine use can cause lasting brain damage*. If you use drugs often, you can develop serious personal problems. Using drugs can become more important than family and friends. You may continue using even when your job or schoolwork is suffering, or when you run into financial, spiritual or legal problems. Young people who frequently abuse drugs may not learn how to solve problems, handle their emotions and become mature, responsible adults.

Amphetamine use and Pregnancy

Babies born to amphetamine users are more likely to be born prematurely, have low birth weight, and experience withdrawal symptoms like agitation and drowsiness. They may also have an increased risk of birth defects. The drug passes to nursing babies through the mothers' milk.

Amphetamines and Addiction

Regular amphetamine users develop *tolerance*. As their body adapts to the drug, they need larger doses to feel the same effects. After chronic use, even at low doses, users can develop *dependence*. *Cravings* can get very intense, and users may go to great lengths to obtain more. They continue to use the drug to avoid the crash they experience when the drug's effects wear off. Withdrawal from amphetamine use can result in extreme tiredness, disturbed sleep, anxiety, hunger, depression, and suicidal thoughts.

The choice is yours – choose to live free from addictions!