



For further information:

Drugaid

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Amphetamine

Amphetamine

Phet, Speed, Billy Whizz, Base

What does it look like?



What is amphetamine?

Amphetamines are synthetic stimulants. Amphetamines were first marketed in the 1930s as Benzedrine. Their current medical use is limited, with Dexedrine being used in the treatment of narcolepsy and Ritalin being used for attention deficit syndrome in children.

As a street drug amphetamine usually comes as a white, grey, yellowish or pinky powder or as putty like substance known as base. Street amphetamines are the most impure of all drugs often with as little as 5% purity.

Amphetamine powder is snorted up the nose, mixed in a drink or by some long term users, prepared for injection. Base is usually swallowed, or wrapped in (cigarette) paper and bombed (swallowed). It can be snorted if dried out properly.

Methamphetamine is a similar, stronger form of amphetamine. This comes as powder, crystals (known as ice) or in tablet form. Tablets are swallowed, the crystal form can be smoked, the powder is swallowed or snorted.

In simple terms, methamphetamine is the granddaddy of the amphetamine family, being twice as strong as dextroamphetamine (e.g dexedrine), and four times the strength of ordinary amphetamine i.e Benzedrine. Please see our separate Methamphetamine leaflet.

Drugaid

What will it do to me?

Effects of taking amphetamine include increase in breathing and heart rate, reduced or no appetite and dilated pupils. You will feel more alert, energetic, confident and less bored or tired. It is quite common for people to talk and talk, seemingly about unconnected nonsense. If you take a high dose you may experience a rapid flow of ideas and feel you have increased physical and mental powers. Depending on how the drug is taken the effects will come on within half an hour and can last for several hours. The comedown can leave you feeling tired, irritable and hungry.

When does it become a problem?

- If you take a lot of amphetamine you can get a number of mental and physical health problems and side effects. These include anxiety, paranoia, hallucinations, headaches, sweating, teeth grinding and strange behaviour patterns like "punding".
- Punding is compulsively repeating certain tasks such as cleaning or disassembling and reassembling electrical items. Similarly obsessive speed habits are skin picking (or squeezing of spots), not dissimilar to that which occurs in the crack and coke user.
- Some people can be more aggressive and confused on amphetamine.
- You can become rundown and suffer from colds and flu more frequently
- Long term use can cause heart problems including heart failure.
- Heavy long term use can sometimes cause a condition known as amphetamine psychosis.
- Continued use can cause calcium deficiency, which can affect your teeth and bones. Because tolerance builds there's a need to take increasing amounts to obtain the desired effect.

Staying safer

- Safer ways of using are smoking, nasal, oral and rectal instead of injecting as there is lower risk of overdoses, infection and contraction of bloodborne viruses.
- Amphetamine can cause the body to dehydrate, if using, try drinking water or soft drinks regularly.
- Perhaps one of the more effective treatments for amphetamine (and other stimulant) addiction is cognitive behavioural interventions (such as CBT; Cognitive Behavioural Therapy), currently gaining popularity in the UK. These approaches are designed to help modify your thinking, experiences, and behaviours and to increase skills in coping with various life stressors.

The Law

Amphetamine is a Class B drug unless it is prepared for injection (e.g. in a syringe) when it becomes Class A.

Penalties

Class B drugs

Possession (without prescription):

5 years imprisonment and/or a fine

Supply: Up to 14 years imprisonment and/or a fine

Penalties

Class A drugs

Possession (without prescription):

7 years' imprisonment or a fine or both.

Supply: life imprisonment or a fine or both.

Production: life imprisonment or a fine or both.