



Amphetamines

WHAT ARE AMPHETAMINES?

Amphetamines are stimulants that speed up the body's system. Some are legally prescribed and used to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

WHAT IS THEIR ORIGIN?

Amphetamines were first marketed in the 1930s as Benzedrine in an over-the-counter inhaler to treat nasal congestion.

By 1937 amphetamines were available by prescription in tablet form and were used in the treatment of the sleeping disorder narcolepsy and ADHD.

Over the years, the use and abuse of clandestinely produced amphetamines have spread. Today, clandestine laboratory production of amphetamines has mushroomed, and the abuse of the drug has increased dramatically.

What are common street names?

Common street names include:

- Bennies, Black Beauties, Crank, Ice, Speed, and Uppers

What do they look like?

Amphetamines can look like pills or powder. Common prescription amphetamines include amphetamine and dextroamphetamine (Adderall®), dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine®), lisdexamphetamine (Vyvanse™) and methamphetamine (Desoxyn®).

How are they abused?

Amphetamines are generally taken orally or injected. However, the addition of "ice," the slang name of crystallized methamphetamine hydrochloride, has promoted smoking as another mode of administration. Just as "crack" is smokable cocaine, "ice" is smokable methamphetamine.

What is their effect on the mind?

The effects of amphetamines are similar to cocaine, but their onset is slower and their duration is longer. In contrast to cocaine, which is quickly removed from the brain and is almost completely metabolized, methamphetamine remains in the central nervous system longer, and a larger percentage of the drug remains unchanged in the body, producing prolonged stimulant effects.

Chronic abuse produces a psychosis that resembles schizophrenia and is characterized by paranoia, picking at the skin, preoccupation with one's own thoughts, and auditory and visual hallucinations. Violent and erratic behavior is frequently seen among chronic users of amphetamines.

What is their effect on the body?

Physical effects of amphetamine use include:

- Increased blood pressure and pulse rates, insomnia, loss of appetite, and physical exhaustion

What are their overdose effects?

Overdose effects include:

- Agitation, increased body temperature, hallucinations, convulsions, and possible death

Which drugs cause similar effects?

Drugs that cause similar effects include:

- Dexmethylphenidate, phendimetrazine, cocaine, crack, and khat

What is their legal status in the United States?

Many amphetamines are Schedule II stimulants, which means that they have a high potential for abuse and a currently acceptable medical use (in FDA-approved products). Pharmaceutical products are available only through a prescription that cannot be refilled.