

Drug Fact Sheet

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Stimulants

Overview

Stimulants speed up the body's systems. This class of drugs includes prescription drugs like amphetamines [Adderall® and Dexedrine®], methylphenidate [Concerta® and Ritalin®]; diet aids [such as Didrex®, Bontril®, Preludin®, Fastin®, Adipex P®, Ionomin® and Meridia®] and illicitly produced drugs such as methamphetamine, cocaine and methcathinone).



Street names

Bennies, Black Beauties, Cat, Coke, Crank, Crystal, Flake, Ice, Pellets, R-Ball, Skippy, Snow, Speed, Uppers, Vitamin R

Looks like

Pills, powder, rocks, injectable liquids.

Methods of abuse

Stimulants can be pills or capsules that are swallowed. Smoking, snorting, or injecting stimulants produces a sudden sensation known as a "rush" or a "flash." Abuse is often associated with a pattern of binge use—sporadically consuming large doses of stimulants over a short period of time. Heavy users may inject themselves every few hours, continuing until they have depleted their drug supply or reached a point of delirium, psychosis, and physical exhaustion. During this period of heavy use, all other interests become secondary to re-creating the initial euphoric rush.

Affect on mind

When used as drugs of abuse and not under a doctor's supervision, stimulants are frequently taken to produce a sense of exhilaration, enhance self esteem, improve mental and physical performance, increase activity, reduce appetite, extend wakefulness for prolonged periods and to "get high." Chronic, high-dose use is frequently associated with agitation, hostility, panic, aggression, and suicidal or homicidal tendencies. Paranoia, sometimes accompanied by both auditory and visual hallucinations, may also occur. Tolerance, in which more and more drug is needed to produce the usual effects, can develop rapidly, and psychological dependence occurs. In fact, the strongest psychological dependence observed occurs with the more potent stimulants, such as amphetamine, methylphenidate, methamphetamine, cocaine and methcathinone. Abrupt cessation is commonly followed by depression, anxiety, drug craving, and extreme fatigue, known as a "crash."

Affect on body

Stimulants are sometimes referred to as uppers and reverse the effects of fatigue on both mental and physical tasks. Therapeutic levels of stimulants can produce exhilaration, extended wakefulness, and loss of appetite. These effects are greatly intensified when large doses of stimulants are taken. Taking too large a dose at one time or taking large doses over an extended period of time may cause such physical side effects as dizziness, tremors, headache, flushed skin, chest pain with palpitations, excessive sweating, vomiting and abdominal cramps.

Drugs causing similar effects

Some hallucinogenic substances, such as Ecstasy, have a stimulant component to their activity.

Overdose effects

In overdose, unless there is medical intervention, high fever, convulsions, and cardiovascular collapse may precede death. Because accidental death is partially due to the effects of stimulants on the body's cardiovascular and temperature-regulating systems, physical exertion increases the hazards of stimulant use.

Legal status in the United States

Many stimulants have legitimate medical use for the treatment of conditions such as obesity, narcolepsy and Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder and are regulated under the Controlled Substances Act. They vary in their level of control from Schedules II to IV, depending on their potential for abuse and for causing dependence. A number of stimulants have no medical use in the United States but have a high potential for abuse. These stimulants are controlled in Schedule I. Some prescription stimulants are not controlled, and some stimulants like tobacco and caffeine don't require a prescription, though society's recognition of their adverse effects has resulted in a proliferation of caffeine-free products and efforts to discourage cigarette smoking. There are also stimulant chemicals in over-the-counter products, such as pseudoephedrine and phenylpropanolamine (PPA) found in allergy and cold medications.

Common places of origin

Stimulants are diverted from legitimate channels and clandestinely manufactured exclusively for the illicit market.

