

# FACT SHEET TWENTY EIGHT

## AMPHETAMINES (SPEED)

### What are Amphetamines?

Amphetamines are manmade stimulants that have been around since the 1800's, they have a long history of use due to their ability to keep people awake and alert and also as a slimming agent, these days they have more limited medical use due to their addictive nature and side effects.

Amphetamines are available as a powder that is pink, yellow, white or grey in colour, most of these powders tend only to be 5-15% amphetamines mixed with a number of other substances including paracetamol, aspirin, vitamin C, caffeine, laxatives, glucose, baby milk or scouring agents. Powders are usually mixed in drinks, dabbed on the gums, snorted or prepared for injection and cost around £8-12 / gram.

Base is a purer form of the drug containing around 50% amphetamines, it comes as a pink or grey putty which can be snorted if dried properly but is more usually swallowed or 'bombed' ( wrapped in a cigarette paper and swallowed to avoid the taste) it costs around £15 / gram.

Another processed form of amphetamine – methamphetamine is said to be a stronger preparation of the drug, it comes as a powder that is snorted or swallowed, crystals that can be smoked and tablets that are taken orally.

Speed is the most common street name for amphetamines but they have many others including billy, whizz, sulph, uppers, wake ups, phet and paste. Methamphetamine is also known as ice (crystal form), meth and crank, amphetamines that are still currently prescribed are Ritalin and Dexedrine.

The effects of these drugs vary according to preparation, strength and purity, the time taken for the effects to kick in also depends on these parameters as well as the route of administration. If taken orally effects begin to be felt after 30 minutes, lasting for between 4-8 hours followed by a slow come down that can last for as long as 2 days.

### The Effects of Amphetamines

The stimulant effects of amphetamines include:

- Dilated pupils
- Rapid breathing and heart rate
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling wide awake and alert

- Energetic
- Excited and chatty
- Confident and happy

### **The Side Effects of Amphetamines**

During the come down people can become irritable, restless, depressed and anxious.

In people who inject there is an increased risk of overdose and because of the impurity of amphetamines there is a risk of injecting something unpleasant directly into the blood stream. As with all injecting practices there is also the danger of contracting HIV / AIDS, hepatitis or other blood borne infections through the use of contaminated needles or injecting equipment.

Due to the stimulant effect amphetamine use can be particularly dangerous for people with high blood pressure or heart conditions. It is extremely dangerous, sometimes fatal, to mix amphetamines with alcohol and other drugs that depress Central Nervous System function.

Tolerance, needing more of the drug to get the same effect, is developed quickly with amphetamine use and they can be addictive.

Long-term use can affect the immune system leaving users feeling run down and more open to colds and other infections, due to lack of sleep and nutrition. Repeated use, often to avoid the effects of withdrawal, can lead to increased aggression, paranoia and psychosis in all amphetamine users.