

## Facts about Amphetamines

**Amphetamines** include three closely related synthetic drugs - amphetamine, dextroamphetamine, and methamphetamine. In pure form, they are yellowish crystals that are manufactured in tablet or capsule form. Abusers may also sniff the powdered crystals or make a solution and inject it. "Ice" or "crystal meth" is a newer, smokeable form of methamphetamine. "Crystal meth," resembles chunks of salt or rock candy. Users are attracted to it because the high lasts longer than that of other similar stimulant drugs - from 2 to 24 hours. The body is deprived of needed sleep, the appetite is suppressed, and rapid weight loss is common. Users of "ice" or "crystal meth" can become addicted very quickly, and find that the addiction is very difficult to break.

**Amphetamines have strong physical effects.** They increase heart and breathing rates and blood pressure, dilate pupils, and decrease appetite. Users also experience a dry mouth, sweating, headache, blurred vision, dizziness, sleeplessness, and anxiety. Extremely high doses can cause rapid or irregular heartbeat, tremors, loss of coordination, and physical collapse. Sudden increases in blood pressure can cause death from stroke, very high fever, or heart failure.

**Amphetamines affect mood and personality.** Users report feeling restless, anxious, and moody. Higher doses may make the user excited and talkative, providing a false sense of self-confidence and power. Large amounts of amphetamines over a long period of time also can result in an amphetamine psychosis: experiencing hallucinations, having irrational thoughts or beliefs, and feeling suspicious and paranoid. The paranoia sometimes results in extreme mood swings and violent outbursts.

**Long-term use leads to health problems.** Heavy use of amphetamines can lead to malnutrition, skin disorders, ulcers, and various diseases that come from vitamin deficiencies. Lack of sleep, weight loss, and depression also result from regular use. Frequent use of large amounts of amphetamines can produce brain damage that results in speech and thought disturbances. Use of methamphetamines during pregnancy may result in severe harm to the developing fetus.

**Addiction to amphetamines is possible.** Some people report a psychological dependence, a feeling that the drug is essential to normal functioning. Others may be physically dependent on the drug. They may develop a tolerance for amphetamines, needing larger doses to get the same initial effect. When regular users stop abruptly, they may experience withdrawal symptoms: depression, irritability, hunger, and fatigue. "Ice," the smokeable form of methamphetamine, creates addiction more quickly than the other forms of amphetamines.

*If you or a family member is experiencing a mental health or an alcohol or other drug-related emergency, seek immediate assistance by calling the 24-hour Suicide Prevention, Mental Health Crisis, Information and Referral Hotline: (216) 623-6888 or the United Way's First Call for Help, 211 or (216) 436-2000.*