

# Amphetamines

## Slang terms

Amphetamines are commonly known as Speed. However, they can also be known by other names including (among others) meth, ice, whizz, go and crystal.

## What are Amphetamines?

Amphetamines are part of the drug family called stimulants, which stimulate the central nervous system. As a result, the drug increases alertness and speeds up messages going to and from the brain to the body. However, amphetamines can also increase endurance and help people stay awake. Amphetamines allow a person to function beyond normal limits under pressure.

## Some basic facts

Amphetamines may come in tablets, capsules, red liquid, and crystal form or in a white, yellow or brown powder. They can be ingested, injected, smoked or inhaled.

The most powerful form of amphetamine is the capsule that contains red-brown liquid. Its proper name is methamphetamine.

In the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, of the 2.3% of Australians over 14, who had used amphetamines in the previous 12 months, those aged 20-29 years (7.3%) were the highest users of amphetamines, especially males (9.8%).

Amphetamines are considered to be one of the most impure drugs, with the average purity less than 5%. Amphetamines often contain sugars, caffeine and ephedrine.

## Immediate effects

The effects of the drug vary from person to person and also depends on how much is taken and how it has been taken. After taking speed, a person may experience the following effects:

- Reduced appetite
- Irritability
- Increased breathing
- Dilation of pupils
- Talkativeness
- Raised blood pressure

## Long-term effects

Regular use of amphetamines may result in:

- Malnutrition
- Psychosis
- Less resistance to infection
- Need to take other drugs
- Violence
- Potential exposure to Hepatitis & HIV, particularly for injecting users

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### The law

It is illegal to make, sell, possess or use speed. Federal and State laws are in place to provide penalties for anyone caught breaking these laws. Penalties differ depending on the type of offence, the amount of drugs involved or any prior convictions.

It is illegal to drive under the influence of drugs, including speed. Penalties include: losing your licence, a fine and/or jail.

However, some types of amphetamines are prescribed by doctors to treat narcolepsy and certain behavioural disorders in children.

### Driving

It is unsafe to drive while under the influence of any type of drug. With amphetamines, the drug affects a person's ability to judge speed and distance, and coordination skills are reduced dramatically.

Another danger is that amphetamines increase a person's confidence and they are more likely to take risks while driving.

### Health

A danger with injecting amphetamines is the risk of becoming infected with the HIV/AIDS virus. Hepatitis B and C and blood poisoning are also a risk if needles are shared or the needles are not clean. After using amphetamines for a long period of time, the drug can result in:

- Blockage of blood vessels - this is very serious, as it can lead to major damage to the body organs
- Inflamed blood vessels and abscesses

### Another danger is an overdose.

The effects of this are:

- Irregular heartbeat
- Heart attack
- High fever
- Burst blood vessel in the brain

Some of these effects can result in death.

### Affect on pregnancy

While pregnant, women, who use amphetamines, have a higher rate of miscarriages, premature labour, underweight babies and complications. No conclusive study on long-term physical/mental effects on children of users has been published.

### References

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