

# ILLEGAL *drugs abuse*

# AMPHETAMINE

Amphetamines were discovered in the late 1920's by George Allas, who was doing research on ways to treat patients in mental institutions who were suffering from depression. His findings indicated that patients who began using amphetamines lost their appetites. This effect proved to have a large market value, and amphetamines were later the main ingredient in "diet pills."

Methedrine, commonly called methamphetamine, is the strongest form of amphetamine. Benzedrine and dexedrine are other forms of this drug. Amphetamines are found in many forms: tablets, capsules, crystals and liquids. They are also manufactured in numerous sizes, shapes and colors. The green, white, yellow or blue tablets may be scored to enable the user to break the tablet into smaller doses. The capsules generally look like time-release cold capsules. The crystals are usually white, while the liquid is clear, sometimes with a slightly brownish tinge. One of the most recognizable features of methamphetamine is its distinctive smell, which has a urine-like odor.

Amphetamine capsules and tablets are swallowed. The methamphetamine crystals are water-soluble, and like the liquid solution, usually injected. Just as with cocaine, the crystals are sometimes sniffed into the nostrils.

The physical effects of the different amphetamine drugs are readily apparent. They tend to cause excitement, talkativeness, trembling, insomnia and dilated pupils. Loss of appetite is one of the main effects, and hallucinations may occur. The amphetamine user, like the cocaine user, can become violent and very aggressive.

Methamphetamine is more potent than other amphetamines. Dry mouth, confusion, aggressiveness, nervousness and the feeling that time passes quickly

are symptoms of methamphetamine use. Other symptoms include insomnia, impotence, very rapid heartbeat, loss of weight, headaches, nausea and blurred or double vision. If used for a long period of time, methampheta-

mine may cause depression, and ultimately, collapse.

The major danger of amphetamine use is that these stimulants produce a feeling of increased power and high levels of generally pleasurable sensa-



# MINES

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tions. This gives rise to the tendency of some individuals to repeatedly use these drugs. Overdosage can easily occur, with the effects of grave impairment of rational judgment, paranoia, aggressive behavior, and interruptions of normal patterns of eating and sleeping. These effects produce rapid physical deterioration.

Constant heavy use of amphetamines sometimes leads to psychotic behavior, which is often indistinguishable from true paranoid schizophrenia. Occasionally, suicides have been attributed to depression caused by the extended use of amphetamines. Users who inject methamphetamine sometimes switch to heroin, due to the fact that heroin produces some of the same pleasurable feelings with none of the deteriorating effects of “speed.” While heroin may be biologically safer, its higher cost generally forces users into some type of criminal activity.

Because amphetamines stimulate the central nervous system, they have a very high potential for creating psychological dependence in the user. Tolerance does develop to their use, and some users experience withdrawal effects after prolonged or extremely high doses. Even though there is no confirmed physical addiction to amphetamines, they may be considered addicting if taken over a long period of time in large doses.

*The three photos above show the deterioration of a young woman using amphetamines.*