

# Amphetamines Addiction



### Amphetamines Addiction

#### Introduction

Amphetamines, which are classified as stimulants, work by using the dopamine reward system of the brain. When these drugs are used, the user's central nervous system is stimulated which causes the brain to produce a higher level of the neurotransmitter dopamine. This increase in the amount of dopamine in the brain creates a euphoric feeling and overall sense of wellbeing. Common street names for these drugs include: speed, beans, bennies, uppers.

Amphetamines can be consumed in a number of ways. They can be taken orally, crushed up and snorted, or diluted and injected intravenously. If injected, the user feels the effects immediately, while it can take up to 20 minutes to feel effects if taken by mouth. People who consume uppers experience a boost of energy and the feeling that they can do anything as speed provides the ability to stay awake for long periods of time without needing rest. Additionally, while taking these uppers an individual may have no desire to eat which can lead to weight loss if the stimulant abuse is continued.

While the initial effects of amphetamine use are enjoyable, the high ends with a noticeable crash, leaving addicts irritable and exhausted. It doesn't take long for the body to build up a tolerance to amphetamines causing a user to increase the dosage to maintain the initial desired effects. Along with tolerance comes psychological and physical dependence and amphetamine addiction. The pleasure centers of the brain will begin to crave the speed if it is not regularly supplied. It is the fear of crashing and the unpleasant feelings of withdrawal that keep a speed addict going back for more despite the negative consequences.

#### Overview and Facts

In 2008, it was reported that 13 million people over the age of 12 had used amphetamines without the supervision of a doctor; 529,000 were regular speed abusers.

#### Symptoms

Amphetamines are strong stimulants that are used to medically treat such disorders as narcolepsy and ADHD. When abused there are a number of side effects that can occur. The side effects experienced depend upon the individual and the amount of time the substance has been used.

Some of the symptoms of amphetamine abuse may be:

##### *Mood symptoms:*

- Euphoria
- Increased alertness
- Irritability
- Mood swings
- Depression
- Anxiety

### *Behavioral symptoms:*

- Hostility
- Aggressiveness
- Altered sexual behavior
- Not sleeping for prolonged period of time
- Not eating for prolonged period of time
- Unrealistic ideas of personal ability and power
- Fast and excessive talking
- Grinding of teeth
- Increased confidence

### *Physical symptoms:*

- Increased body temperature
- Increased blood pressure
- Dilated pupils
- Faster breathing
- Decreased fatigue
- Dry mouth
- Decreased appetite
- Nausea
- Headache
- Irregular heart beat
- Malnutrition
- Blurred vision

### *Psychological symptoms:*

- Paranoia
- Psychosis
- Hallucinations
- Clear and focused feeling

## **Causes and Risk Factors**

Amphetamine dependence is caused by frequent and long-term use of the drug. Some people become dependent faster than others. You may become dependent by using these drugs without a doctor's prescription. You can also become dependent if you take more than you're prescribed. You may even develop dependence by taking the amphetamine according to your doctor's directions.

You have a higher risk of developing amphetamine dependence if you:

- live in the Western, Southwestern, and Midwestern parts of the United States.  
(Statistically, amphetamine abuse is more prevalent in these areas)
- have easy access to amphetamines
- live in a culture where amphetamine use is viewed as acceptable
- have mental disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, or schizophrenia
- have low self esteem or relationship problems
- have a stressful lifestyle
- have emotional problems
- have financial problems

### Diagnosis

To diagnose amphetamine dependence, your doctor may :

- ask you questions to find out how much and long you have been using amphetamines
- take blood tests to detect amphetamines in your system
- perform a physical exam and order any necessary tests to detect health problems caused by your amphetamine abuse

To meet the criteria for an amphetamine dependence diagnosis, you must have three or more of the following symptoms that have occurred within the same 12-month period:

- tolerance to an amphetamine. You know you have built up a tolerance if you need larger doses of amphetamine to achieve the same high.
- withdrawal that is characterized by depression, anxiety, fatigue, paranoia, aggression, and intense cravings. You may need to use a similar drug to relieve or avoid amphetamine withdrawal symptoms
- you use larger amounts of amphetamine or use it for longer periods than intended
- you have been wanting to cut down or stop using amphetamine but have been unsuccessful
- you spend a great deal of time trying to get more amphetamine
- you miss out on or do not go to as many recreational, social, or work activities because of your amphetamine use

### Treatment

Treatments for amphetamine dependence may include:

#### Hospitalization

You may find it easier to go through amphetamine withdrawal in a hospital setting if you experience strong drug cravings. It may also help if you have negative mood changes, including aggression and suicidal behavior.

#### Therapy

Individual counseling, family therapy, and group therapy can help you:

- identify why you use drugs
- resolve problems that led you to use drugs
- repair relationships with your family
- learn ways to avoid amphetamine use
- find activities that you enjoy besides drug use
- get support from others who have been amphetamine users because they understand what you are going through (usually in a 12-step drug treatment program)

#### Medication

Your doctor may prescribe medication to ease severe symptoms of withdrawal. People who have severe intravenous amphetamine dependence may be prescribed methylphenidate. Fluoxetine may decrease your cravings. Imipramine may help you stick with your treatment for amphetamine dependence. Your doctor may prescribe other medications to help relieve symptoms of anxiety, depression, and aggression.

**Sources**

<http://www.healthline.com/health/amphetamine-dependence#Treatment>

<http://www.blueridgemountainrecovery.com/addiction/amphetamines/signs-symptoms-effects#Statistics>

<http://amphetamines.com/addiction/>