Amphetamine Abuse
(Speed, Bennies, Ice, Crank, Amphetamine Analogues, Uppers)

Amphetamines are a type of powerful stimulant drugs. This class of drugs includes substances such as methamphetamine, Ritalin™, Adderal™ and amphetamine itself. They have a number of medical uses. These include the treatment of daytime sleepiness disorder (*narcolepsy*), attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children, traumatic brain injury and chronic fatigue syndrome in adults. Because amphetamines can lessen your appetite and cause weight loss, they were once widely prescribed as "diet pills." However, this is no longer considered a valid reason to use the drug.

Substances known as “Designer Drugs” are also in the amphetamine family. They are chemically similar. They usually have a different effect upon the user and have greater effects on the central nervous system. These drugs can produce hallucinations, detachment and less outward stimulatory effects. These drugs are known as:

- MDA - “Love Drug.”
- MDMA - “Ecstasy.”
- MDEA - “Eve.”

SYMPTOMS

Physical effects:

- Reduced appetite.
- Increased/distorted sensations.
- Hyperactivity.
- Dilated pupils, flushing and restlessness.
- Dry mouth.
- Erectile dysfunction.
- Headache.
- Increased breathing, heart rate and blood pressure.
- Fever and sweating.
- Diarrhea or constipation.
- Blurred vision and impaired speech.
- Dizziness, uncontrollable movements or shaking.
- Insomnia.
- Palpitations and irregular heartbeat.
- Higher doses or long-time use can lead to convulsions, dry or itchy skin, acne, and poor skin color. Young adults who abuse amphetamines may be at greater risk of suffering a heart attack.

Psychological effects:

- Anxiety and/or general nervousness.
- Feelings of intense pleasure (*euphoria*).
- Creative or philosophical thinking.
- Increased confidence with the perception of increased energy.
- Increased sense of well-being.
- Increased concentration/mental sharpness.
- Increased alertness.
- Feeling of power or superiority.
- Higher doses or long-time use can lead to increased aggression, emotional instability, excitability, talkativeness and occasionally a mental state that mimics serious psychiatric illness.

WITHDRAWAL EFFECTS

- Anxiety.
- Depression.
- Agitation.
- Fatigue.
- Excessive sleeping.
- Increased appetite.
- Psychosis.
- Suicidal thoughts.

OVERDOSE

An amphetamine overdose can lead to a number of different symptoms. These include:

- Severe abnormal thinking (*psychosis*).
- Chest pain.
- Very high blood pressure.
- Stroke.
- Heart failure.
- Death.

DEPENDENCE AND ADDICTION

Tolerance develops fast with amphetamine abuse. People quickly increase the amount of the drug that is needed to satisfy the addiction. Amphetamine does not cause physical dependence in the usual sense, though withdrawal can still be hard for a user. Chronic users of amphetamines sometimes snort (inhale into the nose) or use needles to inject the drug. They do this to experience the full effects faster and in a more intense way. However, these ways have the added risks of infection, vein damage, and higher risk of overdose with drug injection.

When drug use interferes with daily activities, it has become abuse. One sign of addiction is when a person cannot control their use. Also, addiction has likely occurred if a person keeps using even with bad consequences. This includes problems with family, friends, law enforcement and employment. When a person becomes obsessed with using, tries unsuccessfully to stop using or to control their use, and has a powerful urge to use the drug, the chances are high that the person suffers from addiction or chemical dependency. A person's risk of developing this disease is much higher if there is a history of chemical dependency in the family.

SIGNS OF CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY

In addition to the above, further signs of chemical dependency include:

- Being told by friends or family that drugs have become a problem.
- Fighting when using drugs.
- Not remembering what happened while using (*blackouts*).
- Feeling sick from using drugs but continues to use.
- Lying about use or amounts of drugs used.
- Needing chemicals to “get going.”
- Suffering in work performance or school because of drug use.
- Needing drugs to relate to people or feel comfortable in social situations.
- Using drugs to forget problems.

The presence of 1 or more of the above signs indicates there is likely a problem.

TREATMENT

The treatment for most complications related to amphetamine abuse may be divided into 2 types:

- Short-term (*urgent*) medical treatment. This helps to preserve life and prevent or minimize damage from the complications described above.
- Long-term substance abuse treatment. This helps to achieve recovery from drug abuse or addiction. Most hospital providers can provide referral information for such treatment if the hospital does not offer it.

Addiction cannot be cured but it can be treated successfully. Treatment centers are listed in telephone directories under:

- Alcoholism and Addiction Treatment, Substance Abuse Treatment or Cocaine, Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous. Most hospitals and clinics can refer you to a specialized care center. The US government maintains a toll-free number for obtaining treatment referrals: 1-800-662-4357 or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD) and maintains a website: http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov. Other websites for additional information are: www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov and www.nida.nih.gov.
- In Canada, treatment resources are listed in each province with listings available under: The Ministry for Health Services or similar titles.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

After treatment discharge, it is essential to do the following:

- Follow all instructions from your caregiver very carefully.
- Take all medications as prescribed. If you cannot, contact your caregiver right away.
- Keep all appointments for further evaluation and counseling.
- **Do not** use drugs, alcohol or any other mind and mood altering drugs unless prescribed by your caregiver.
- **Do not** operate a motor vehicle or machinery until your caregiver says it is OK.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have a seizure (*convulsions*).
- You become very shaky or tense.
- You become light headed or faint.
- You notice sudden or gradual weakness on one side of the body or in an arm or leg, or are unable to walk.
- You have a sudden, severe headache, blurred vision or high fever.
- You develop chest pain, nausea or vomiting.

If you have any of the above symptoms, **DO NOT DRIVE**. Have someone else drive you or call your local emergency services (911 in U.S.) for help.

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