



# DRUGS

◆ CONCERNING YOUR HEALTH ◆

## AMPHETAMINES—STIMULANTS

Amphetamines are substances which increase both mental and physical activity in the body and stimulate the central nervous system. These drugs are known by a variety of names, including "uppers," "crank," "shabu," and "speed." The most potent form of these stimulants is methamphetamine, which is available in tablet form as a prescription drug. Methamphetamine is also made into small chunks called "ice" or "glass" which when smoked delivers an immediate and powerful jolt to the user. However, most speed is made by illegal drug laboratories and is sold as a powder which is taken orally, inhaled, or dissolved and injected.

When a person uses speed it often produces feelings of joy, strength, and alertness. Since the drug combats feelings of fatigue and hunger, users experience increased alertness and energy and often take repeated doses, going for days and weeks without food or rest in a "run." As a result, their bodies and brains are deprived of much needed rest and nourishment. Other short term effects may include anxiety, irritability, irrational behavior, talkativeness, inability to sleep, chest pain, irregularity of heart beat, hypertension, convulsions, cardiac arrest, and death.

Prolonged use of speed may lead to manifestations of psychosis with paranoid delusions and auditory and visual delusions, anxiety, depression, and fatigue. None of the stimulant drugs create a true physical addiction, and giving up the use of amphetamines does not cause great physical discomfort. However, users may experience psychological dependence, finding that life without the drug is extremely difficult.

Tolerance develops in which the user's body needs ever increasing amounts of the drug to achieve the same level of effect. Continued use of any of the amphetamines may cause physical collapse and death. Speed users often appear much older than their years, a result of the very harmful effects of the drug on their bodies. There's a reason why you don't bump into many long time speed users on the street. They simply don't live very long.

## BARBITURATES—DEPRESSANTS

Barbiturates are substances which decrease physical and mental activity of the body and depress the central nervous system. These drugs, also known as "downers," include a variety of substances which are often divided into two groups known as tranquilizers and sedative-hypnotics. Tranquilizers reduce nervous tension; sedative-hypnotics reduce tension and are sometimes called "sleeping pills."

There are a variety of dangers associated with the use of drugs which depress the

central nervous system. Prolonged use of barbiturates may result in irritability and anxiety. Barbiturate users quickly develop tolerance to the drug so that they require ever increasing amounts to obtain the desired effect. This directly increases the danger of an overdose which often results in death. The drug also directly depresses the brain's control of breathing, greatly increasing the user's risk of death. Other problems users encounter include slurred speech, poor judgment, and physical and psychological dependence.

Barbiturates have been widely prescribed by physicians; reports of problems associated with their use has prompted manufacturers to try to develop less dangerous replacement drugs. But many dangerous barbiturates are available on the international black market, creating greatly increased risks for users.

At best, tranquilizers and sleeping pills provide only temporary relief for anxiety. They are not a cure and may actually contribute to the underlying cause of the anxiety by masking or concealing other symptoms which may otherwise be recognized and treated.

Abrupt withdrawal from barbiturates may result in restlessness, severe nervousness, anxiety, convulsions, and death. Addicts can end the nightmare of dependence on barbiturates by gradually reducing their dosage. No barbiturates are completely safe, and no pill can match the miracle of a person taking control of his or her own life.

## HALLUCINOGENIC DRUGS

Hallucinogenic drugs are substances that distort the perceptions and understandings of persons who use the drugs. By temporarily changing the chemistry of the brain these drugs affect the user's senses, emotions, and reasoning. Hallucinogenics are sometimes called psychedelic or mind revealing drugs. A drug induced change in one's understanding of sensory perceptions is sometimes called a "trip."

Hallucinogenic drugs include several very powerful substances capable of creating temporary alterations in brain chemistry. Hallucinogenic drugs include LSD, PCP, STP, DMT, psilocybin, peyote, mescaline, and others. Certain inhalants also contain psychoactive compounds which have similar effects on the user.

When a drug with hallucinogenic properties is used, the temporary effect may last from an hour up to several days. The changes in brain chemistry may result in a feeling of euphoria or an equally unpleasant feeling of fear. Users may also experience intense emotions of horror or sadness. Longer term effects include flashbacks in which drug induced "trips" may reappear several months after use.

One of the most dangerous hallucinogenic drugs is PCP, or "angel dust." A powerful anesthetic, PCP sometimes produces an intense euphoria in humans. However, users often become extremely violent and impulsive under the influence of PCP. Many deaths have been caused by PCP use. Like most hallucinogenic drugs, the effects of the drug are extremely unpredictable.

While hallucinogenic drugs do not appear to be addicting, bizarre and dangerous behavior is often observed in persons under the influence of these substances. Some users become mentally ill after using hallucinogenic drugs; others may feel a "roller coaster" of emotions for weeks afterward. As a result, many people avoid using any kind of hallucinogenic drug.

