

Stimulants

What are the facts about stimulant drugs? What are the dangers and what are addicts really risking?

What are stimulants?

As the name suggests, stimulants increase alertness, attention, and energy, as well as elevate blood pressure and increase heart rate and respiration. Stimulants historically were used to treat asthma and other respiratory problems, obesity, neurological disorders, and a variety of other ailments. But as their potential for abuse and addiction became apparent, the medical use of stimulants began to wane. Now, stimulants are prescribed for the treatment of only a few health conditions, including narcolepsy, ADHD, and depression that has not responded to other treatments.

How do stimulants affect the brain and body?

Stimulants, such as dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine and Adderall) and methylphenidate (Ritalin and Concerta), have chemical structures similar to a family of key brain neurotransmitters called monoamines, which include norepinephrine and dopamine. Stimulants enhance the effects of these chemicals in the brain. Stimulants also increase blood pressure and heart rate, constrict blood vessels, increase blood glucose, and open up the pathways of the respiratory system. The increase in dopamine is associated with a sense of euphoria that can accompany the use of these drugs.

What are the possible consequences of stimulant use and abuse?

As with other drugs of abuse, it is possible for individuals to become dependent upon or addicted to many stimulants. Withdrawal symptoms associated with discontinuing stimulant use include fatigue, depression, and disturbance of sleep patterns. Repeated use of some stimulants over a short period can lead to feelings of hostility or paranoia. Further, taking high doses of a stimulant may result in dangerously high body temperature and an irregular heartbeat. There is also the potential for cardiovascular failure or lethal seizures.

Is it safe to use stimulants with other medications?

should be used in combination with other medications only under a physician's supervision. Patients also should be aware of the dangers associated with mixing stimulants and OTC cold medicines that contain decongestants; combining these substances may cause blood pressure to become dangerously high or lead to irregular heart rhythms.

For help with Prescription drug
abuse or addiction:

Call
Toll Free: 888-9NO-DRUGS or 888-966-3784

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Source: National Institutes on Drug Abuse