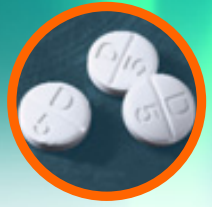


Dexamphetamine

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FACTS

WHAT IS DEXAMPHETAMINE?

Dexamphetamine is a psychoactive drug (a drug that affects the mind or behaviour). It is a type of amphetamine (*a stimulant drug*) that increases the activity of certain chemicals in the brain. Examples of other stimulant drugs are caffeine, nicotine, ecstasy and cocaine.

Dexamphetamine comes as white, round tablets that have the marking 'D5' on one side. They come in bottles of 100 and should be taken orally (by mouth). Dexamphetamine is only available with a doctor's prescription.

WHY DO PEOPLE USE DEXAMPHETAMINE?

Dexamphetamine is used to treat *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder* (ADHD). People with ADHD find it difficult to pay attention and control the things they think and do. Doctors prescribe dexamphetamine for people with ADHD to help them concentrate at school and improve their relationships with friends, family and school teachers.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF DEXAMPHETAMINE USE

Dexamphetamine can be effective and safe when used as prescribed by a doctor. The stimulant effect of dexamphetamine increases the activity of certain chemicals in the brain. In people with ADHD this increase improves their ability to concentrate and focus on tasks.

The effects of dexamphetamine usually last between four and six hours. Like all medications, dexamphetamine can produce side effects if used inappropriately. Side effects can include:

- nausea and vomiting
- dizziness
- blurred vision
- depression
- weight loss
- nightmares
- dry mouth
- headaches
- insomnia (inability to sleep)
- loss of appetite.

Like all drugs, dexamphetamine will affect each person differently depending on the characteristics of the:

- **individual** (person taking the drug) – mood, height, weight and gender
- **drug** – the amount used and the way it is taken
- **setting** (environment) – where the drug is taken and who it is taken with.

Overdosing on low doses of dexamphetamine is uncommon. Most overdoses occur when higher doses of dexamphetamine are taken. Using dexamphetamine with other drugs also increases the risk of overdose. Common signs of overdose include:

- dilated pupils
- fever or chills
- sweating
- abdominal cramps
- rapid breathing
- nausea and vomiting
- headache
- coma.

If you think that you or someone you know has overdosed on dexamphetamine, telephone the **Poisons Information Centre** (13 11 26), an ambulance or a doctor for advice. Urgent medical help may be required.

DEXAMPHETAMINE AND THE LAW

It is *illegal* to possess, sell or use dexamphetamine in Australia without a medical prescription. Anyone found in possession of, or using, dexamphetamine without a prescription may be fined up to \$2,000 and/or receive a prison term of up to two years.

Anyone convicted of selling or intent to sell dexamphetamine illegally will receive a fine of up to \$100,000 and/or a prison term of up to 25 years. They will also receive a criminal record, which can lead to difficulties in getting a job, credit cards, loans or a visa for overseas travel.

DEXAMPHETAMINE AND DRIVING

In Western Australia, it is against the law for anyone to drive under the influence of a psychoactive drug (a drug that affects the mind or behaviour). Breaking this law carries penalties including disqualification from driving, fines and/or imprisonment.

If a person is caught driving under the influence of dexamphetamine, factors such as whether the drug has been prescribed and the type of warnings the doctor gave about driving under the influence of dexamphetamine will be examined in court.

Tolerance occurs when the body gets used to taking a drug, and higher doses are needed to produce the same effects. People taking dexamphetamine may notice a decrease in the medicine's effects when the body becomes used to taking it.

Dexamphetamine can produce physical and psychological dependence. Physical dependence means the body experiences unpleasant side effects if the drug is not taken. Psychological dependence means that a person thinks he/she needs the drug to be able to function properly.

Regular users who stop taking dexamphetamine suddenly after using it for a long time may experience **withdrawal symptoms** such as fatigue, increased appetite or depression. When a decrease in dexamphetamine use or dosage is required, it is important that this is done gradually under the supervision of a doctor. This will reduce the likelihood of withdrawal symptoms occurring.

DEXAMPHETAMINE AND OTHER DRUGS

Using dexamphetamine at the same time as other drugs is called **polydrug use**. Combining drugs can be dangerous and may seriously damage your health.

You should avoid drinking alcohol if you are taking dexamphetamine. If dexamphetamine and alcohol are combined, the effects of alcohol on the body may not be clearly felt. However, your Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) will still go up as more alcohol is consumed. This means that you may drive with a BAC above the legal limit of 0.05% (0.02% for 'P' platers) without realising it.

Driving under the influence of dexamphetamine can impair coordination, delay reaction time, distort perceptions and make it difficult to judge distances and speed.

The effects of using dexamphetamine at the same time as other stimulant drugs such as ecstasy or cocaine are unpredictable. They may include a very fast heartbeat, sweating, shaking, irregular breathing, aggressive behaviour and even a heart attack.

MORE INFORMATION

Your doctor or pharmacist will be able to help if you have any questions about dexamphetamine. For further information about any of the topics listed on this fact sheet, contact:

- **The Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)**

24-hour confidential information, counselling and referral service.

Telephone (metro only): (08) 9442 5000

Toll free (country only): 1800 198 024

E-mail: adis@health.wa.gov.au

- **HealthInfo**

Provides information resources and health service referrals.

Telephone: 1300 135 030

- The **Drug Aware youth information website** also contains information on dexamphetamine and other drugs. Visit www.drugaware.com.au and look under the **Drug Info** section.