

How dangerous are amphetamines?

The blood pressure of the user increases due to the constriction of blood vessels which may in turn produce severe headaches, or an irregular heartbeat. Seizures, stroke or permanent brain damage may result from injury to the small vessels supplying blood to the brain or the user may have a heart attack.

After a number of days on methamphetamines users are typically depressed and this depression may last for several days. During this period the potential for suicide is high.

With prolonged use the user will often develop a drug induced psychosis which can last from days to years. The main characteristic of methamphetamine psychosis is the presence of prominent hallucinations, paranoid delusions and bizarre behaviour.

Methamphetamine hallucinations affect all five senses.

- **Auditory (sense of hearing) hallucinations** are common and usually the user hears voices commanding them to commit acts of violence.
- **Visual (sense of sight) hallucinations** occur where the user sees objects that are not there. These types of hallucinations can be quite frightening and confusing and may result in bizarre behaviour.
- **Olfactory (sense of smell) hallucinations** are frequently reported where the user smells odours that are not there and the user interprets those smells inappropriately (eg. complain that they can smell their brain rotting).
- **Gustatory (sense of taste) hallucinations** also occur where the user experiences a false sense of taste and may refuse to eat because they can taste poison in their food.
- **Tactile (sense of touch) hallucinations** are also frequently experienced by users' (eg. they feel that there is something crawling on or beneath their skin).

Dependence on amphetamines occurs very easily and users find it extremely hard to stop taking these drugs.

Where to get more information

Accurate and up-to-date information on amphetamines can be obtained from the following websites:

Australian Drug Information Network (www.adin.com.au/)

Australian Drug Foundation (www.adf.org.au/)

National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre (www.ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/)

Where to seek help

In an emergency, call 000.

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support.

Other than in an emergency situation, contact your local ADF Medical Centre or Psychology Section. Navy personnel can seek help through their divisional system, local Alcohol and Drug Program Advisor (ADPA) or can directly contact their local Alcohol and Drug Program Coordinators.

Mental Health Resources

Local Medical Centres Your local medical officer can provide immediate assistance and referrals as required.

Psychology Support Section All Psychology Support Sections offer after-hours, critical incident support through the local Duty Officer/Officer of the Day.

Defence Community Organisation

<http://intranet.defence.gov.au/dco/> or www.defence.gov.au/dco/

The DCO provides services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week all year round including public holidays. During normal business hours the first point of call is the Duty Social Worker or Military Support Officer. Outside these core hours and on Public Holidays, calls should be directed to the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) on 1800 801 026 or if calling from overseas +61 2 93594842.

Chaplains There are Chaplains connected to all units in Australia who can provide support and appropriate referrals.

The Family Information Network for Defence (FIND) (1800 020 031)

FIND is a phone service that provides easy access to personnel information on matters of everyday interest and concern. It is a confidential service that is available to every Service person and family anywhere in Australia.

Lifeline (131 114) If you, or a friend, need to talk to someone about a problem immediately, you can call Lifeline for the cost of a local call.

Veterans and Veteran's Families Counselling Service (VPCS) This service is available to veterans of all deployments and their families. VETLINE – 24 hour emergency line (1800 011 046).

ADF Mental Health Strategy All-hours Support Line (ASL) The ASL is a confidential telephone triage support service for ADF members and their families that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. (1800 628 036) (FREECALL within Australia) and (61 2 9425 3878) (outside Australia)

Australian Defence Force Mental Health Strategy (ADFMHS)

Defweb Address <http://intranet.defence.gov.au/dsg/sites/dmh/>

Internet Address www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/i-dmh.htm

Email DMH.mentalhealth@defence.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Defence

ADF Mental Health Strategy AMPHETAMINES (‘Speed’, ‘Meth’, ‘Ice’)

be
well

work
well

live
well

What are amphetamines?

Amphetamines are drugs which belong to a group of drugs called 'psycho-stimulants' which speed up the messages going to and from the brain to the body. Most illicit amphetamines are produced in backyard laboratories and, unlike legally prescribed amphetamines, often contain other drugs and substances that can have adverse or harmful effects on the user who has taken the drug. Purity levels vary considerably and range from 1% to 99% pure.

'Speed' is the term commonly used to describe amphetamines whereas methamphetamines are usually called 'Ice' or 'crystal meth'. The 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey reports that around 1 in 10 Australians aged 14 years and over have used amphetamines. Amongst people aged in their 20's, about 1 in 5 Australians have used amphetamines. Amphetamines are readily available throughout the country, in both urban and rural areas. Almost all the amphetamines used in Australia are methamphetamine.

Amphetamine use is illegal and potentially dangerous

What will happen to me if I am found to be using amphetamines

The ADF has a **ZERO Tolerance** policy on the use of amphetamines by its members. As a deterrent measure the ADF conducts ongoing random drug testing of ADF members (minimum of 10 % of members per annum). The length of time amphetamines remain in a person's body ensures that those members taking amphetamines will return a positive urine test days after they have taken the drug. The breakdown products of amphetamines are also deposited in hair and hair drug tests will return a positive test result months after the last use of amphetamines.

ADF members hold themselves to a set of values – these values are not consistent with breaking the law and supporting criminal activities. The procuring of amphetamines supports criminality. The use of these types of drugs is not only dangerous, but also threatens your career and financial well-being, and affects your family's security. It also impacts on your mates who are often assumed to be guilty by association when you are caught using amphetamines.

Under Defence Instruction (General) Personnel 15–2, use of amphetamines by members of the ADF will usually lead to disciplinary and/or administrative action to terminate the member's appointment or initiate discharge proceedings.

What will happen to me if I self refer for using party drugs?

Self-referral is a once only opportunity. It enables those members who feel they may be dependent on a prohibited substance, or those who have had previous prohibited substance involvement, to access timely and appropriate treatment.

Under Defence Instruction (General) Administrative 45–2 health care professionals are obligated to report illicit drug use that is not already known to the chain of command.

A request for self-referral does not prevent a Service authority from administratively terminating an appointment or discharging a member. However, Service authorities may look upon self-referral favourably when considering discharge or retention action. This will also depend on whether the member:

- a. is assessed as substance dependent
- b. fails to demonstrate abstinence from involvement with prohibited substances
- c. fails to demonstrate potential for future effective service
- d. is assessed by a psychologist or psychiatrist as being likely to relapse or to have developed a long term psychiatric illness.

What do amphetamines do?

Amphetamines work very quickly and speed up the heart and breathing rates and give the user a sense of euphoria and well-being. Users may also experience heart palpitations or irregular heartbeat. Amphetamine use also increases blood pressure, dries out the mouth, increases sweating, enlarges the pupils and can cause headaches. The user will feel more energetic, alert and confident, with a heightened sense of well-being. They may be noticed to be extremely alert, talkative, restless and excited. They will have difficulty in being able to get to sleep. Panic attacks can also occur. Reduced appetite and irritability is common and some people become anxious, hostile, aggressive and paranoid. Amphetamines have high habit-forming potential, and people who use them regularly for a period of time experience severe physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms when they stop using them.

The purity of these highly addictive drugs is extremely variable and overdose can easily occur. After taking Ice, users often become agitated and their behaviour may become unpredictable (eg. friendly and peaceful one moment then angry and frightened the next).