

The Toilet Paper

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ABUSING PRESCRIPTION STIMULANTS

MAY 2007

BACKGROUND

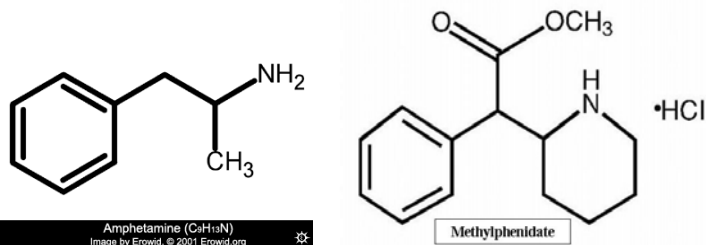
Drugs such as Adderall, Ritalin, or Dexedrine are prescription stimulants used in the treatment of ADHD. However, college students (6.9% of them nationally, according to the most recent data) are increasingly abusing these drugs, that is, taking them without having a prescription, or taking prescription drugs for non-medical purposes. The most commonly reported motives for non-medical use of prescription stimulants are to increase alertness and mental concentration or to enhance performance while taking exams or studying... thus the term "study drug."

POSSIBLE HEALTH RISKS

- High doses of stimulants may cause **paranoia, cardiac arrhythmia, dangerously high body temperatures, or seizures.**
- The Rx stimulants most commonly abused are included in the Controlled Substances Act 2nd highest group of drugs and medicine for likelihood for potential of abuse and addiction.
- In February 2006, the FDA's Drug Safety & Risk Management Advisory Committee recommended that ADHD stimulant drugs receive a black box warning on their labels to discuss their possible risk of causing high blood pressure, stroke, and sudden death.

WHAT THEY DO

Stimulants are similar in chemical structure to a family of neurotransmitters called monoamines, which include norepinephrine and dopamine. When taken, stimulants will increase the monoamine neurotransmitters, such as norepinephrine and dopamine, in the synaptic space by binding to the monoamine transporters and preventing reuptake. As a result, blood pressure and heart rate are increased, and respiratory pathways are opened up. Brain activity is enhanced, and levels of attention, energy and alertness rise. The two most common types of prescribed stimulants are amphetamine (Adderall, Dexedrine) and methylphenidate (Ritalin, Concerta).



KNOW BEFORE YOU BLOW

There are general risks with abusing any prescription drug: individuals have not been given proper dosage instructions by a doctor, and are not informed of the risks that those who use the drugs for medical reasons are aware of. But if you are set on abusing prescription stimulants, here's what you should know:

- Antidepressants may over-intensify the effects of stimulants and increase risk of cardiovascular problems.
- Combining stimulants with decongestant medicines may cause **cardiac arrhythmia or dangerously elevated blood pressure.**
- Insufflation of stimulants (snorting, blowing, etc.) may increase one's risk of **dangerous respiratory problems, cardiac arrhythmias, and paranoid or psychotic reactions**, as well as the likelihood of becoming addicted
- High doses that stimulate the rapid release of dopamine can increase the risk for addiction*
- Taking stimulants daily for an extended period of time will result in withdrawal upon discontinuation. Symptoms of withdrawal are **exhaustion, irritability, anxiety, and depression.**
- M.A.O. inhibitor antidepressants combined with amphetamines can cause **headaches and other signs of hypertensive crisis.** Many **neurological toxic effects** can occur, sometimes with fatal results.
- Prescription stimulants mask alcohol's depressive effects on the body, but any and all toxic effects of alcohol will still occur at the same rate. One's blood alcohol content could grow dangerously high without any noticeable effects.

*There is no way to know how much of a stimulant is considered a "high dose," as this varies from person to person.

STUDY SAFELY (and LEGALLY)

γtake a walk γ study with friends γ take a cold shower γ exercise γ plan ahead γ eat foods rich in protein, omega-3 fats and vitamin B γ take a nap γ drink caffeine γ inhale peppermint γ set goals and reward yourself when they are met γ disable your internet access γ keep a journal of your study progress γ seek help from a writing tutor, TA or SARN Peer Advisor γ change your location γ listen to classical music γ get a professional massage at WesWELL's Stress-Free Zone this Thursday 5/10, 7-9pm in the MPR