

STUDENT SUMMARY

METHAMPHETAMINE

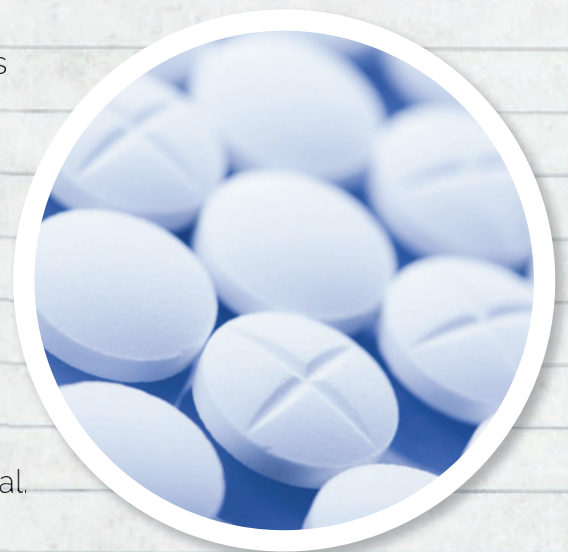
What is the difference between amphetamine and methamphetamine?

Methamphetamine is a chemical compound which is very closely related to amphetamine, but stronger. Amphetamine was common in Australia in the early 1990s, but nowadays what you buy on the streets is almost always methamphetamine.

How is methamphetamine made?

Methamphetamine is a synthetic or man-made drug which is typically made in backyard laboratories and sold illegally. However, certain types of amphetamines are made by pharmaceutical (medicine) companies and can legally be prescribed by a doctor to treat different medical conditions.

These over-the-counter amphetamines will be briefly covered at the end of this section. The remainder of this section will address those forms of the drug which are illegal.



Methamphetamine and the law

Unless amphetamines are prescribed for a person by a medical practitioner, possessing, using, making or selling amphetamine/methamphetamine is against the law. Methamphetamine and the law will also be covered in greater detail in lesson 6.

What are some of the different names for methamphetamine?

There are many different names used for methamphetamine, including

BASE SPEED
METH SHABU
ICE P CRYSTAL

Are there different 'preparations' of methamphetamine and how is it taken?

There are four different preparations of methamphetamine: speed, base, ice and pills. All four preparations are the same drug. They only vary in strength and appearance.

Speed: Speed is a white or off-white powder and is typically of low strength. It can be snorted (that is sniffed up through the nose), injected or taken orally (swallowed). Speed is usually mixed ('cut') with glucose, bicarbonate soda, ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, vitamins, Epsom salts or some other substance to cheaply make larger quantities to increase profits. There is no quality control on illegal drugs, which means there is no guarantee that what you are buying is safe.

Base: Base is a damp or oily substance with a white or yellow-brown colour which is stronger than speed powder. It is typically injected and sometimes swallowed.

Ice: Ice, also known as 'crystal meth', is methamphetamine in its strongest form. It has a frosted to white crystalline appearance. Ice is usually smoked or injected. The effects are stronger and it can cause agitation, worse comedowns and it is very addictive.

Pills: Methamphetamine has also been sold in pill form on the ecstasy market to people who think they are buying ecstasy. These pills contain only small dose of methamphetamine, which is often combined with Ketamine (hallucinogen made from veterinary drug used to block the feeling of pain) to give an ecstasy like effect. These pills are usually swallowed.



WHAT ARE THE SHORT TERM CONSEQUENCES OF TAKING METHAMPHETAMINE?

Cognitive

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased motivation• More talkative | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased attention• Increased alertness |
|---|---|

Physical effects

- Dry mouth
- Dilation of pupils (i.e. increased size of the black portion of the eye)
- Increased energy
- Increased activity
- Rapid and irregular heart beat
- Sweating
- Hypertension (i.e. high blood pressure)
- Increased body temperature
- Increased libido (i.e. increased sexual desire)
- Trouble sleeping
- Palpitations
- Reduced inhibitions (i.e. doing and saying things that you would not normally do)
- Decreased hunger
- Nausea
- Increased arousal



Psychological (Mood/Mental Health)

- A sense of well-being
- Elevated mood or euphoria (high)
- Enthusiasm for everything
- Anxiety
- Agitation
- Aggression – Not all people become aggressive when using methamphetamine. Certain factors influence whether a person becomes aggressive (e.g. personality, alcohol, not eating, certain medical conditions)
- Irritability
- Restless and excited
- Increased risk taking behaviour

In high doses

- Agitation
- Hallucinations (e.g. seeing or hearing something that is not really there)
- Mental confusion
- Paranoia (e.g. thinking someone or something is out to get you)
- Violence – Not all users become violent (see above)
- Tremors (i.e. rapid and rhythmic muscle movements)
- Headaches
- Loss of coordination
- Flushing/fever (i.e. temperature)
- Dizziness
- Nausea/vomiting

Relationships

It is clear from the above effects that methamphetamine has the potential to damage relationships. The chaotic and unpredictable behaviour and mood of people who use methamphetamine can make it difficult to keep a relationship going over time.

Legal

The possession and use of methamphetamine can lead to a criminal conviction.

OVER-THE-COUNTER OR PHARMACEUTICAL AMPHETAMINES

Certain types of amphetamines can be legally prescribed by a medical doctor to treat different medical conditions. For example methylphenidate (also sold as Ritalin) and dexamphetamine tablets are used in the treatment of **attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)** and **narcolepsy**.

ADHD is a medical condition which results in a person being inattentive and/or hyperactive, forgetful, impulsive, and distractible. Both methylphenidate and dexamphetamine have been very effective in the treatment of ADHD. They have been shown to increase attention, concentration, learning and memory.

Narcolepsy is a medical condition involving excessive daytime sleepiness. Typical of a stimulant, methylphenidate and dexamphetamine are good at increasing wakefulness.

Both methylphenidate and dexamphetamine tablets have been used by people illegally by buying or stealing them from people on the street. The drugs can be used illegally as a stimulant drug.

Another pharmaceutical stimulant is **pseudoephedrine** which is an ingredient in cold and flu medications like Dimetapp and Sudafed as it acts as a decongestant (that means it helps to take away that stuffy feeling of a blocked nose).

Pseudoephedrine is often used to make illegal drugs such as methamphetamine. The use of these drugs in such ways is not good for a person and is illegal. Such use becomes drug abuse, rather than legitimate use.

ECSTASY

Ecstasy is classified as a psychostimulant with hallucinogenic properties. It is an illegal synthetically (man-made) made drug. True ecstasy is a substance called 3, 4- methylenedioxymethylamphetamine or MDMA. However, not all ecstasy tablets contain MDMA. In fact, some 'ecstasy' contains no MDMA at all. Rather it is made up of methamphetamine and other substances like ketamine (i.e. a human anesthetic), PMA (i.e. an extremely poisonous hallucinogenic stimulant), ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, caffeine, glucose, bicarbonate soda or other household chemicals. As ecstasy is illegally made in backyard laboratories there is no way to know exactly what ingredients have been included.

What are some of the different names for ecstasy?

Ecstasy is also known as:

- E
- Eccy
- Eggs
- XTC
- Doves
- Pills
- 'the love drug'
- MDMA

Are there different preparations of ecstasy and how is it taken?

Ecstasy most often comes in the form of a tablet or a 'pill', which may be any size or colour and have a variety of designs stamped on it. Ecstasy can also come in capsule or powder form. It can be swallowed or crushed and sniffed. On rare occasions it is injected after being dissolved in water.

Ecstasy and the law

It is against the law to have, use, make, import or sell ecstasy. Ecstasy and the law will be covered in greater detail in lesson 6.

How does ecstasy work?

When ecstasy is used it is taken into the bloodstream, travels to the brain and there it activates chemicals called neurotransmitters that produce its effects. The main chemical that ecstasy affects is called serotonin, which is involved in the control of moods, sleep, pain, appetite and sex drive.

WHAT ARE THE SHORT-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF USING ECSTASY?

Cognitive

- Lack of inhibitions
- Increased alertness
- Confusion
- Poor concentration



Physical

- Energetic
 - Tongue and cheek chewing
 - Teeth grinding
 - Dry mouth and thirst
 - Increased body temperature
 - Sweating
 - Nausea
 - Inability to sleep
 - Overheating and dehydration
 - Loss of energy
 - Trouble urinating
 - Weight loss
 - Vomiting
 - Joint pains
 - Headaches
 - Hot and cold flushes
 - Blurred vision
 - Muscle aches
 - Fainting
 - Problems having sex or having an orgasm
- Death – Deaths from ecstasy are extremely rare, but when they do happen, they often attract a great deal of media attention. Few deaths are the result of poisoning from MDMA itself. The majority of ecstasy related deaths are a result of using the drug in hot and crowded environments where users have overheated and become severely dehydrated. A very small number of deaths have resulted from people drinking too much water after taking ecstasy. If too much water is consumed this can dilute the levels of salt and other minerals in the blood. In rare cases this can result in the brain swelling, which can lead to coma or death.

Psychological (Mood/Mental Health)

- A sense of well-being
- Euphoria (a high)
- Warm and loving
- Feelings of increased closeness to others
- Increased self-confidence
- Irritability
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Paranoia
- Panic attacks (i.e. extreme feeling of anxiety that makes people think they are either going to lose control, go mad or even die)
- Extreme symptoms like suicidal thoughts (i.e. thoughts of killing ones self) may also be a result

Work and study problems

In a study on work and study problems related to ecstasy they found the following ecstasy related harms:

- Increased use of sick leave
- Increased skipping of classes
- Trouble concentrating
- Lack of motivation
- Reduced work performance
- Quitting work or being sacked was also not uncommon among frequent users

These problems are reported to occur because ecstasy interferes with mental processing. In addition it takes time to get over a weekend on drugs, the effects of which are likely to impact on work and study.

Financial problems

Some ecstasy users report financial problems because they use heavily and spend a lot of money on buying ecstasy. These problems may include not being able to afford other social activities or items the person may wish to buy. However, on a more serious note it may also involve not being able to pay the rent or buy food.

Relationships

It is clear from the above effects that ecstasy can damage relationships. The short-term effects can lead to increased arguments.

Legal

The possession and use of ecstasy can lead to a criminal conviction.

In high doses, ecstasy can cause:

- Agitation
- Hallucinations
- Mental confusion
- Paranoia
- Violence - Not all users become violent (see above)
- Tremors
- Headaches
- Loss of coordination
- Flushing/fever
- Dizziness
- Nausea/vomiting

PSYCHOSTIMULANTS IN GENERAL

What happens when a stimulant drug is wearing off (i.e. coming down)

One of the worst parts of using psychostimulants like methamphetamine and ecstasy is the come down, and this is true for all forms of the drug. Symptoms include:

- Feeling irritable
- Feeling depressed - this can last from a few hours to a few days
- Lacking energy
- Feeling people are out to get you
- Not being able to sleep because of feeling agitated and aroused

Some people take more drugs to try and avoid the symptoms of the 'come down'. This may include using drugs such as cannabis. Using other drugs to avoid the come down can have a really bad effect on the body and should be avoided. The biggest problem is that you don't really know exactly what you have taken, which means if you mix drugs it can lead to unpredictable effects. The best way to get over any drug is to simply rest and give the body and mind time to recover.

How many people use methamphetamine and ecstasy?

Very few young people use methamphetamine or ecstasy. In the Australian Secondary Schools Students Survey conducted in 2011 they asked over 24,000 students aged between 12-17 years of age if they had ever used methamphetamine or ecstasy. Of all those young people:

- 97% reported that they had never used methamphetamine, and
- 97% reported that they had never used ecstasy

The very low prevalence of methamphetamine and ecstasy use in young people is also confirmed by the results from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey which was conducted in 2010. In this survey they found that 97% of 14-19 year olds reported that they had not used methamphetamine or ecstasy in the past 12 months. It is important to be aware of this very low prevalence as drug use is often initiated by young people because they believe that it will help them fit in and feel part of the 'crowd'. If people realised that the majority do not use, it would help to decrease the perceived pressure to try drugs such as methamphetamine and ecstasy.

