



A USERS' GUIDE TO

# Speed

REVISED

**THIS BOOKLET IS A  
SELF HELP GUIDE FOR  
PEOPLE WHO USE SPEED**

(GO-EE, WHIZ, AMPHETAMINES)

IT LISTS THE MOST COMMON FEATURES OF SPEED USE,  
WAYS TO REDUCE HARMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE USE OF SPEED  
AND STRATEGIES FOR CUTTING DOWN AND QUITTING.

**The best way to avoid problems with drugs is to not use them. However, if you choose to use them it is important to do so in the safest way possible. This booklet aims to give information to current speed users about the drug and the risks involved, so that they can make well informed decisions.**

This booklet does not have to be read from cover to cover. The first half gives the reader information on speed, common features of speed use and ways to reduce problems associated with the use of speed. Users who want to cut down, or stop using altogether, will find the second half of the booklet useful.

Of course not all the information that users need can be contained within one booklet. For further information about speed, or any other drug, contact your local telephone drug information service. The numbers for these services are listed on the back page.

## **WHAT IS SPEED?**

---

**“SPEED”** is the name given to a range of different street drugs that, in chemical terms, are related to **AMPHETAMINE**. Amphetamines are drugs that are classed as **STIMULANTS**, or sometimes they are called psychostimulants. Stimulants are drugs that increase central nervous system activity - they basically speed up the way your brain does things, including making you breathe faster, making your heart beat faster, giving you more energy, and making you feel like you can handle anything that comes along. A variety of stimulants are used all over the world, some for many centuries. They vary in strength and effect, and may be legal or illegal. Amphetamine, ephedrine and cocaine are examples of strong stimulants; caffeine and nicotine are also stimulants, but have much weaker effects. Some stimulants occur naturally, like cocaine, which comes from the coca plant; however, amphetamine is a completely man-made substance that is related to adrenaline, a stimulant that occurs naturally in our bodies.

Speed most often comes in powder form, which may be either *amphetamine sulfate* or *methamphetamine*. It varies in colour from white through to beige, orange and pink, and anywhere in between. The powder may be very fine and powdery or more coarse and crystalline, depending on how much it has been cut and with what. Speed has a bitter, chemical taste and sometimes has a very strong smell, so often people taste or smell it before they buy it to make sure they are actually getting what they pay for. But the smell and taste won't always guarantee that it is actually speed.

The chemicals that are used to make speed were made illegal in the late 1980s - early 1990s. This means that backyard chemists making speed have had to find new things to put into it. It also means that now, what we call "speed" is really a whole *family* of different but related drugs, each with its own recipe. Police seizures of speed, which have been analysed, show that the average level of amphetamine was only 5% throughout the 1990s.

The average purity has started to increase, but even so, chances are that if you buy a gram of powder speed, most of what you get is going to be substances other than speed, like sugar or glucose, bicarbonate soda, ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, vitamins, epsom salts or some other substance. There is NO quality control on street drugs, and no guarantee that what you are buying is safe.

Although powder is still the most common form of speed available in Australia, it does come in other forms, such as a liquid, like the red stuff called ox blood or liquid red, or tablets, like duromine, dexamphetamine or Ritalin.

One form of speed that has become more available is a crystal sort of methamphetamine. As with normal powder speed, there are many different recipes that are used to make the crystal form, so there are different sorts available that may look, smell and taste different. They have a lot of different names, including crystal, crystal meth, ice, shabu, batu and glass. Although people may think that they are all different to each other, the fact is that they are all forms of methamphetamine and they all have very similar effects - it is the intensity of the effects that differ.

Generally, these forms of methamphetamine come in the form of a crystalline white powder, or crystals that look like bits of broken glass or crushed ice and are usually colourless but may be lightly coloured pink, blue or green. People use these forms of methamphetamine in a number of different ways, including snorting or swallowing, but many people either inject them or smoke them through a special glass pipe similar to a crack pipe. Most of the methamphetamine available in Australia is made locally, but some of it also seems to be imported from countries like the Philippines and Thailand. The imported product is more likely, but not always, to be sold to users as shabu or ice.

Although these forms of speed have only started to become more available in Australia since 2000, we know from the experience of other countries that they are more dangerous than the normal speed that has been available for decades.





In countries like Japan, the Philippines and parts of America, particularly the West Coast and Hawaii, drugs with names like ice and shabu have been around for a while and have caused a lot of problems for people who use them. Problems occur because these crystal forms of methamphetamine are a lot stronger and purer than Australian speed users are used to.

Everything that we say about speed in this book also applies to crystal forms of methamphetamine, no matter what name the dealer gives them and actually what we say about speed applies more to crystal, because all crystal is just a stronger form of speed. So, when we say that speed keeps you awake, it means crystal will keep you awake longer. When we say speed might cause you depression or anxiety when you are coming down, it means that crystal is more likely to do the same and that the comedown will be more intense than with normal speed.

Keep in mind, whatever name you give to the crystal forms of methamphetamine that have become more widely available in the last few years, it is a strong form of speed that will cause the same sorts of effects and problems, just more intensely than would normal speed.

## ***TIPS TO AVOID GETTING BAD SPEED***

---

-  BE VERY CAUTIOUS about what you're using
-  if you don't already have a reliable dealer, try to find one and stick with them
-  listen to what other people say about new batches
-  when you're using a new batch, only try a little at first ... you can always use the rest later if you need to

## **WHO USES SPEED?**

---

Speed is a drug that is quite easy to obtain, and a wide range of people use it. Since the mid-1980's, speed has been the second most popular illegal drug in Australia (after cannabis). 6% of all Australians have tried speed and about 16% of all Australians aged between 20 and 29 have tried speed. More males than females are recorded to have tried it. Most people first try speed in their late teens, around the age of 17 or 18.

## **WHY DO YOU USE SPEED?**

---

There are many reasons for first trying speed and for continuing to use it. The most common reasons reported by speed users are:

- ◇ to *feel good*
- ◇ to *party and have fun*, for *energy and self-confidence*
- ◇ *curiosity* - maybe your friends have tried it and have told you about the good effects
- ◇ it can help you *feel like one of the group* - especially if all your friends are saying how much fun it is and you don't want to feel like you're missing out
- ◇ *availability* - it's easy to get and cheaper than some other drugs
- ◇ it can *suppress your appetite* and help you *lose weight*
- ◇ *boredom* - maybe you're just bored and looking for a bit of action
- ◇ believe it can *help cope with stress*, worries or a bad mood
- ◇ believe it can *help with work, university or school* by giving more energy
- ◇ some people use speed *out of habit*

**ASK YOURSELF, WHY DO I USE SPEED?**

***Experimental Use:*** usually this pattern is seen in young adults who try speed a couple of times or on an irregular basis. You'll usually come down from it and may feel tired, depressed and irritable for a few days.

***Occasional Use:*** most speed users fall into this category, using mainly for a big night out and for the feelings of euphoria, confidence, alertness and energy that make people feel more sociable. Too much speed may make you feel anxious and irritable, or suspicious and paranoid. If you use speed with alcohol or other drugs, or use too much speed in one night, you increase your chances of a bad reaction. You may also feel more confident or "invincible"- so be careful crossing the road, **DON'T DRIVE, DON'T PICK FIGHTS and ALWAYS USE CONDOMS IF YOU HAVE SEX.**

***Situation Specific Use:*** some groups of people use speed in certain situations, usually for energy and alertness. Truck drivers, students studying for exams, shift workers, sports people and soldiers at war have all used speed for these reasons. Be aware that performance is not necessarily made better, and it might even be made worse, especially if you use other drugs at the same time. If you use speed too often, you will build up tolerance (become used to the dose), and you might start to use downers to get to sleep.

***Intensive Use:*** in this pattern, speed is a major part of the person's life, even though the person might be handling well other areas of their life - maybe they still have friends and a job. Don't be fooled though, if you are using speed often enough, it is likely to be doing you some harm.



Maybe all your weekdays are spent coming down, or all your money goes up your nose or into your arm, or you might not see old friends or your family as much as you would like.

***Compulsive Use:*** this is the least common but most harmful use pattern. Speed becomes the focus of your life, usually causing work, relationship, physical, mental, financial and legal problems. You might get into heavy binges, usually injecting (which is the cause of a number of other problems), continuing until you have no speed left. You then start coming down intensely; sleep for a day or two and get up and do it all over again. The more heavily you use speed the more likely are the harms discussed in the next section to occur. You may also start to use other drugs more heavily to try to medicate the side effects of speed.

**ASK YOURSELF, WHICH PATTERN DO I FALL INTO?**

## ***HOW DO YOU USE SPEED?***

---

Most people snort or swallow speed the first time they try it. These are generally safer ways of using speed than injecting it, although people may report nasal problems if they snort frequently, or may not like the chemical taste of speed. Speed may also be sprinkled on top of cones and smoked (sno-cones), or inserted into the anus (shafting) or the vagina (shelving), from where it is absorbed. People who buy the crystal forms of methamphetamine known by names like ice, shabu or crystal, sometimes smoke these in a special glass pipe, similar to a crack pipe.

**Snorting** speed brings the effects of speed on more slowly than injecting and the effects are not so intense. The effects last longer and the come-down is not nearly as strong.

**Swallowing** speed brings it on most slowly and is the weakest of all, but the effects also last the longest and the come-down is more bearable. If you snort or swallow speed, you will not build up as much tolerance and you are also more likely to be able to resist the urge to use more when you think you should be slowing down.

## ***TIPS TO AVOID PROBLEMS FROM SNORTING OR SWALLOWING SPEED:***

---

- chop granules of speed finely with a knife or razor blade before snorting
- alternate nostrils when snorting
- switch to swallowing until any nasal irritation goes away
- if you don't like swallowing because of the taste of speed, wrap it in a cigarette paper and swallow it whole or mix it with a sweet drink like orange juice or coke
- rubbing speed into your gums or tongue may give you mouth ulcers

Research shows that the **riskiest way of using speed is to inject it.**

If you have friends who inject speed, they may tell you how much better it is when injected – they may tell you that it is easier and cleaner than snorting; that your nose will not hurt; that you get an amazing rush and that it is cheaper because you get a better “bang for your buck” (that is: quicker and better effects).

But you are likely to use a lot more speed if you inject rather than snort or swallow it, so you will build up tolerance much more quickly. You risk becoming addicted, which means you are more likely to have a range of health and other problems. Injectors may use other drugs to medicate the side effects of speed adding to the risk of health problems. They also spend more money on drugs, and usually have more severe come-downs.

Injecting can also spread blood-borne viruses like **hepatitis C, hepatitis B and HIV**. You are at risk when you **share any injecting equipment** which may have blood on it – equipment such as needles, spoons, water, swabs, tourniquets and filters - or when you stop the bleeding with your fingers. In avoiding infection, simply having your own needle is not enough as sharing any equipment can pass on these viruses. Many speed users also report vein problems like scarring and bruising from improper injecting. Tips for better injecting are listed in the next section.

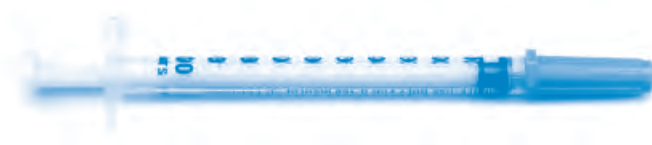


## ***TIPS TO AVOID PROBLEMS FROM INJECTING SPEED***

---

- ❑ **snort or swallow speed if at all possible**
- ❑ if you inject, **use a new needle every time** and **don't share any other injecting equipment** such as spoons, water, swabs, tourniquets or anything which may get blood on it. Don't stop anyone else's bleeding with your finger – use a fresh tissue or cotton wool and then a band-aid

- always keep a stock of new needles at home, and take needles with you when you go out - ***it is leagl to carry clean fits***
- get plenty of fits ***before*** you score or when planning a big night
- do not use cigarette filters as some brands contain glass fibres which can damage your heart and veins. A corner torn from an alcohol swab, a cotton bud or a tampon is safer
- if you don't have a new needle, try snorting or swallowing speed, or if you ***must*** inject then clean the needle thoroughly with full-strength bleach and water. Check your local needle exchange or users' group about the best way to clean needles and other information about injecting
- if you must re-use mixing equipment (e.g., spoons, bowls), clean them with bleach, alcohol swabs or soapy boiled water. ***Never re-use filters or swabs because they cannot be cleaned properly***
- wash hands with soap or use an alcohol swab before injecting, wiping downwards only at the injecting site
- take breaks from using speed (e.g., use every second weekend only)
- reduce the amounts of speed you use on each occasion
- it is dangerous to mix other drugs with speed - ***and especially dangerous to inject pills or methadone because they can block your veins***
- dispose of needles safely (e.g., in a fit box, screw top jar or needle exchange)



## **SAFER INJECTION TECHNIQUES**

---

### **DON'T**

- ❖ **never inject below your waist** - you could get blood clots, which can be fatal
- ❖ avoid injecting into veins in your hand as they are more likely to break and clot
- ❖ never inject deeper than half a centimetre (5mm) or you may hit an artery. Arteries are deeper, harder to pierce than veins, and the blood is brighter and will spurt rather than 'ooze'
- ❖ never inject into a site that is sore, swollen or tender - this area may be infected or the vein may be blocked. Injecting here will only increase infection and could end up making you sick
- ❖ don't inject into a vein that is hard or that you've had trouble getting blood from before. It probably has clots in it and injecting here will only risk pushing the clots into your bloodstream
- ❖ don't inject into the same vein twice in a row. Rotate injection sites to give the vein a break and a chance to recover
- ❖ don't bend your elbow to stop the bleeding – apply pressure and hold up the bleeding site

### **DO**

- ❖ warm your arm before injecting. Slap the skin over the injection site **BEFORE SWABBING**
- ❖ let your arm hang down for a minute before injecting to build up blood pressure
- ❖ always use a tourniquet (buy one from a pharmacy or use elastic, rope, a tie or a stocking. Using a belt may cause you to miss the vein). Loosen the tourniquet as you inject
- ❖ pump the muscles in your arm **AFTER** the tourniquet is on

# ADDICTION

Did you know that speed can be JUST AS ADDICTIVE as other drugs such as heroin or alcohol? Many more people have been going to drug treatment centres for help with speed problems in the past few years. Research has found that most regular speed users have tried to cut down or stop at some stage. Regular users build up tolerance to speed, which means that they need to use more than when they first started, and the coming-down becomes harder. If speed is starting to take up more and more of your time, you may feel that your use is out of control and you may become very stressed when you are unable to get any speed. Using in the morning and throughout the day, or needing to use it before you go out, are other good indicators that you might have developed problems with using speed. If you have had the thought lurking in the back of your mind that you should take a break for a while, then trust your instincts – they might be right!

*Answer each of the following questions and add up your scores ( the numbers in brackets)*

- 1** Have you ever thought your speed use is out of control?  
*Never (0)      Sometimes (1)      Often (2)      Always (3)*
- 2** Has the thought of not being able to get any speed really stressed you at all?  
*Never (0)      Sometimes (1)      Often (2)      Always (3)*
- 3** Have you worried about your speed use?  
*Never (0)      Sometimes (1)      Often (2)      Always (3)*
- 4** Have you wished that you could stop?  
*Never (0)      Sometimes (1)      Often (2)      Always (3)*
- 5** How difficult would you find it to stop or go without?  
*Not at all (0)      A little (1)      Very difficult (2)      Impossible (3)*

*Higher scores, especially over 4, indicate that you might be dependent, and that you should consider cutting down or at least having a break to prevent or reduce problems.*

## **HEALTH RISKS**

---

Common physical and psychological health problems reported by speed users include a poor appetite, anxiety, depression, fatigue, loss of energy, trouble sleeping, heart flutters, and tremors. Some regular users also have symptoms like hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't there), paranoia (feeling like you are being followed or stared at), violence, panic and suicidal thoughts. All of these problems are more likely to happen if you use large amounts of speed (e.g. more than 1 gram) at a time, binge on speed for several days, regularly use speed more than 2-3 days a week, inject it, or use the stronger crystal forms of methamphetamine which have become more available in Australia. Problems can also increase when you drink alcohol or use other drugs with speed, so **BE CAREFUL ABOUT MIXING DRUGS.**

**ASK YOURSELF, WHICH SPEED-RELATED HEALTH PROBLEMS WORRY ME THE MOST?**

## ***HOW TO AVOID THESE PROBLEMS***

---

- try to switch from injecting to snorting or swallowing
- have a break, even just a couple of weeks
- use less often
- give your body and mind plenty of rest, and make sure you get enough sleep
- warm aromatherapy baths may help you relax and get to sleep
- drink at least 8 glasses of water a day to get rid of toxins
- good food strengthens your immune system so that you can handle problems, and the stress they cause, better.  
Fresh fruit and vegetables, cereals and brown bread, lean red meat or lots of spinach and brown rice for iron, and dairy products for calcium are all very important. Try to eat regularly
- if you do not feel like eating food, try to drink Sustagen, or Milo with milk
- take vitamins and minerals, and your health food shop may recommend something to help you get rid of toxins
- talk to a counsellor or a good friend if you feel you have problems



## ***OTHER SPEED RELATED PROBLEMS***

---

People who use speed regularly experience other problems such as relationship problems with a partner, friends or family (e.g., arguments, jealousy or break ups), work or study problems (e.g., trouble concentrating, reduced performance or getting sacked), financial problems (e.g., being in debt, not having money for food or rent, committing crimes to buy drugs), and legal problems (e.g., being convicted for possessing, using or dealing speed). Dealing speed may also result in violent disputes.

## ***TIPS FOR REDUCING THESE PROBLEMS***

---

- budget for food, rent and bills BEFORE you spend money on drugs
- if you can, use 'direct debit' banking systems for rent, loans or other repayments
- **don't buy drugs on credit**
- avoid dealing speed or other drugs
- allow time to come down from speed so that it doesn't interfere with work or study
- carry the phone number of a legal aid solicitor at all times
- know your legal rights
- don't drive while you're speeding or on any other drugs
- always carry condoms and make sure you use them if you have sex, including oral sex
- try to always be with at least one person who is straight. Take it in turns. If the straight person thinks that things are getting out of control, then trust them and take their advice - they probably have better judgment if they're not out of it and you are
- keep in touch with good friends, especially those who don't use drugs so that you have a good support network to help you out if things become difficult. Just talking about problems can help them seem more manageable. If you can't talk to your friends and if your problems seem to be getting worse, see a counsellor. Your local telephone drug information service can recommend counsellors (see back page of this booklet for numbers)

# OVERDOSE

You may overdose on speed when you use too much of it. This is different from a dirty hit which may make you feel sick. When you overdose, you are likely to develop headaches, chest pains, rapid breathing and pounding heart, and you might also become paranoid, agitated, anxious, panicky, shaky, hot and sweaty. Whilst you can die from a speed overdose, it is unlikely.

***If a friend overdoses, DON'T just think "they'll get over it".***

- ◇ **GET TO A DOCTOR STRAIGHT AWAY** - either call an ambulance or go to a hospital emergency department. Remember everything your friend took and when, so you can tell the doctor
- ◇ **stay with the person**, try to keep them in a calm, quiet room away from other people, loud music and bright lights. The more there is happening around them, the more panicked they may become. See if they want sips of water as they are probably dehydrated, but don't force them or this may upset them
- ◇ Reassure them in soothing tones that you are there, that the ambulance is on its way and that everything will be OK. If you can **convince them that everything is under control** the panic and anxiety might die down. Try to get them to breathe slowly and deeply. Count out the breaths with them. They may feel the need to talk but what they say might be garbled. Try to avoid arguing with them, as arguing may only make things worse

# PSYCHOSIS

True speed psychosis is a temporary state brought on by using too much speed. The main symptom is paranoia (e.g., extreme jealousy, feeling like you are being followed, feeling like people are plotting against you). This and other symptoms like hallucinations (hearing voices and seeing things that aren't there) usually go away after a period of time if you stop using. Sometimes downers are used to calm psychotic people during a psychotic episode. When people first start experiencing symptoms of speed psychosis they know it is just their mind playing tricks on them from the speed. But if they keep using, they may start to believe these fears, and they may no longer understand that it is because of the speed. People in this state become more paranoid, scared and even aggressive.

## ***IF A FRIEND GETS SPEED PSYCHOSIS***

---

- give them PEACE and QUIET away from people (even friends) and noise
- try to stop them using more speed even if they want to
- do not argue with them no matter what they say - stay calm and quiet
- seek help from a sympathetic doctor you feel you can trust
- if they are really out of control and might hurt themselves or someone else, take them to a hospital or contact a mental health crisis team (listed in the front section of the phone book)

If you learn to recognise the early signs of speed psychosis, you can reduce or stop your speed use and prevent full blown psychosis.

## ***Have a break from speed if you:***

- regularly have odd thoughts that won't go away
- feel overly suspicious of your friends or other people
- are imagining things that aren't really there - either seeing things that other people can't see or hearing things that other people can't hear
- often feel like you are being noticed by other people so that you begin to avoid people, especially strangers, in public places
- feel extreme jealousy
- have used speed for more than three days in a row or have used it more than three weekends in a row
- experience anxiety and depression. Sometimes these symptoms come before psychosis and should be taken as a warning to cut back or take a break
- lack sleep - a few nights of good sleep may also help

## ***SPEED AND YOUR BRAIN***

When you take speed it is absorbed into your bloodstream, travels to your brain, and there it activates chemicals (neurotransmitters) that produce its effects. When these brain chemicals are released or activated, they make you feel euphoric, alert or energetic. After the speed wears off, these chemicals are depleted or run down. This is what causes you to feel depressed, irritable, flat and uninterested when you are coming down – all the opposite things to speeding. It can take from days to several weeks for these chemicals to be fully restored, and therefore it may take days to weeks for you to feel normal again. Using speed all the time can lead to a total depletion of these neurotransmitters. This is what has happened to people who need to use speed 'just to feel normal'. If you keep using speed to avoid coming down or feeling bad you will only reduce the number of neurotransmitters even more and end up being worse off.

## **CAN SPEED CAUSE BRAIN DAMAGE?**

---

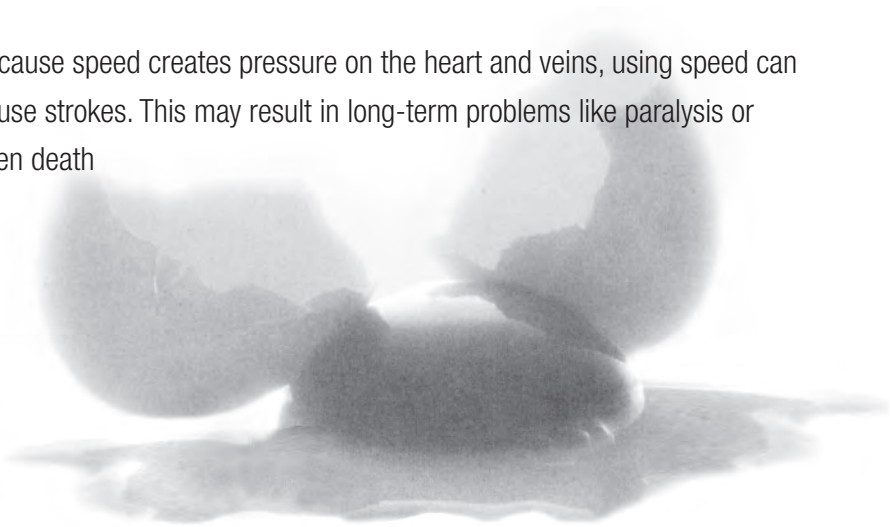
laboratory research has shown that large amounts of speed can kill rat brain cells, and the same thing might happen in heavy speed users

When you buy street speed, you also get impurities mixed with the speed. These impurities are the by-product of speed manufacture. These by-products can also be toxic to the brain, maybe even more harmful than speed

speed can also cause brain damage if you overdose, or take too much at once, as it raises your body temperature to dangerously high levels

apart from actually killing the brain cells, speed can affect the way that brain cells work. In other words, your brain adapts to speed just like your body does. This can affect the way you think, your ability to concentrate, and especially your mood. These changes may take weeks or months to return to normal – that is why you may feel moody and unwell for a month or two when you give up using

because speed creates pressure on the heart and veins, using speed can cause strokes. This may result in long-term problems like paralysis or even death





# SPEED & THE LAW

Speed is illegal in all states and territories of Australia. The law states that you can be convicted of either possessing or supplying an illegal substance. The law is different in each State but ranges from a \$2000 fine and/or 2 years imprisonment for possession to \$500,000 fine and/or life imprisonment for supply of large amounts.

It is not difficult to cross the line between personal use and supplying. If you are charged you will need to prove that whatever drugs you had were intended for your own use and no-one else's. If you are organising deals for friends, in the eyes of the law you are supplying and you will be prosecuted as a dealer. The more separate bags of speed you have, the more it looks like you are dealing. Lists of names of speed users can be used as evidence against you.

The police can search you, your premises or your vehicle without a warrant. Before you are searched you have the right to ask for the officer's name, rank, place of duty, and the offence they suspect you have committed. Even undercover officers have to identify themselves before they can make an arrest. Police procedures require same sex body searches. If there are no female officers present, another woman can be asked to do the search. A full body search can also be performed, but only a doctor can perform an internal examination of body cavities.

## ***Remember:***

- you have the right to ask for the officer's name, rank, place of duty and the offence they suspect you have committed, before you are searched
- you do not have to answer any questions except your name and address
- you should seek legal advice before making a statement
- try to keep calm and be as polite as possible

## ***FITS AND THE LAW***

---

Carrying fits is legal but injecting drugs is not, so you could still be arrested if the police can prove the fits were for drug use. Used fits or traces of drugs in them can be used as evidence of drug use.

Even if drugs are not found on you, the police can still charge you with use of an illegal substance if you admit to having used drugs, even if the use was in the past.

# IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE YOUR SPEED USE...

Many speed users say that they want to change their pattern of speed use in some way. Some want to cut down the amount they are using or take a break for a while. Some want to change from injecting to snorting or swallowing or alternating the way they use speed. Others want to quit using speed altogether. The next section outlines some ways to help you make these changes.

## *STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU CUT DOWN*


---

No one way works best for everyone - it's up to you to decide what suits you. Two options are listed below:

➤ **Take a short break:** This will give you time to work out why you use speed and when you are likely to want to use, so that you know when it is going to be the hardest to control. Following a short break, try using at a safer level, say twice a week, only on weekends, or by snorting rather than injecting or alternating these methods. Use the tips listed below to help you feel better while coming off speed, and follow this plan for about 6 weeks or so if you can – the longer the better. Then decide if this work for you. Is controlled use of speed what you really want?


Maybe the second way, gradually cutting back on speed is easier to do.



 **Gradually cutting back on speed:** Set a realistic short-term goal of how much you will cut down. Maybe at first you could cut down by one day per week, and by a quarter of a gram at a time. Make a date to review this goal two weeks later. See cutting down as a step-wise process, a bit like a ladder. Once you have successfully climbed down one rung and stayed there for a while, you may wish to try stepping down to the next rung. You can also use the tips listed below to help you feel better while coming off speed.

With both of these strategies, feel proud about small changes – they may not seem like much to other people but they take a good deal of planning and effort from you. Also, be prepared for others' reactions. Be confident in your decision to change even though some people (like relatives) may want you to give up altogether, and others (like friends who use) may not want you to change at all. The main thing is for you to be happy with your use.

### *TIPS TO HELP YOU FEEL BETTER WHEN YOU ARE COMING OFF SPEED*

 remember that the mood swings you are having are a normal part of speed withdrawal and that they will eventually go away. Light exercise (a walk in a park or swimming), healthy food, relaxation techniques and regular sleep can help you to deal with mood swings. Work out when bad moods are likely – what triggers them – so you can plan something else to do other than using. You may find it useful to keep a mood diary – an example of this is provided below. Reduce your use of caffeine and other drugs which can also affect moods. Try to combat negative thoughts that are a normal part of coming off. For example, say to yourself “I can cope if I relax and breathe evenly” instead of “This is too hard, I’ll never make it.”

when your appetite starts returning, **try to eat healthy food** - lots of fresh fruit and vegetables - and stay away from greasy take-aways. Your body is working hard to get rid of all the toxins that were mixed with your speed, so don't make it work hard on digesting unhealthy food as well. Try to **drink at least 8 glasses of fluid a day** (NOT ALCOHOL - water, cordial, fruit juice or herbal teas are the best )

for your headaches and aches and pains, a **massage** from a friend (or a professional if you can afford it) will do wonders. **Warm aromatherapy baths** (e.g., use lavender, ylang ylang or sandalwood for relaxation) are great, or try a spa or sauna. **Light exercise** - even just stretching - may also help. You may also like to see a herbalist, acupuncturist or a naturopath

get a **relaxation tape** that goes through tensing and relaxing each muscle group, and use it regularly, at least once a day or more if need be. Alternative bookshops sell tapes and are listed in your phone book. **Meditating, yoga and tai chi** are also great for helping you learn to relax - look up your local Community College and see what things you can learn to help you relax

if it all seems too much and you think you will never make it, then you may find it useful to get help from a doctor, a counsellor or an NA (Narcotics Anonymous) group. All of these are confidential and could help - **just having someone who understands what you are going through can make a difference between getting through your withdrawal or not.** Your local telephone advisory service can refer you to someone (see back page of this booklet)

remind yourself of how far you have come. You made it through the first few days or weeks - what techniques did you use to help you cope then?

if you have a **panic attack** where you hyperventilate (ie. have very quick, short breaths), try breathing deeply and slowly into a paper bag or cupped hands for a few minutes until it passes

## EXAMPLE OF MOOD DIARY

When you use speed, your mind creates links between the situation and using. This means that certain situations, people and places, moods, times of the day and so on, which were there when you used speed, can trigger your desire to use again. In the space provided, list the places where you usually use speed, the people around, and your mood (how you are feeling) just before you use. Also note down something else you could do rather than use speed when that situation happens again. These are just examples – make it relevant to you.

WHERE	WITH WHOM	MOOD	ALTERNATIVE
eg. lounge room	alone	bored, down	go for a walk in the park
eg. at home before work	flatmates	tired / shitty from night before	don't go out when you have to work the next day
<b>your situation...</b>			

## STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU STOP

---

One of the best ways you can help yourself quit (even if just for a while), is to know what to expect when you do. Dependent speed users do go through “withdrawal” from speed when they stop using. As with other drugs, if you’ve used speed regularly and for a long time, your body adapts or gets used to having speed in your system on a regular basis, and will only function “normally” when there is speed in your system. When you stop using, your body has to *re-adapt*, this time to *not* having speed in your system. Withdrawal is this period of readjustment, where the body “learns” to work normally again without speed.

Speed withdrawal symptoms are likely to be much more psychological than, say, heroin withdrawal. When a heavy speed user decides to stop using speed, what they will experience over the next few months while withdrawing can be roughly divided into four stages. The table below shows what these stages are, about how long the symptoms may last and what to expect from each stage. Not everyone will get these symptoms. Some people may get symptoms that aren’t listed, but the ones listed are the most common features of speed withdrawal.

## COMMON FEATURES OF SPEED WITHDRAWAL

Time since last last speed use	Common Symptoms
<b>Day 1 - 3</b> (comedown)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• exhaustion</li><li>• increased sleep</li><li>• depression</li><li>• decreased appetite</li><li>• restlessness</li><li>• irritability</li></ul>
<b>Day 2 - 10</b> (withdrawal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• strong urges (cravings) to use speed</li><li>• mood swings, alternating between feeling irritable stressed, agitated, restless and anxious, to feeling tired, lacking energy and generally run down</li><li>• very disturbed sleep</li><li>• poor concentration (feeling scattered)</li><li>• general aches, pains and stiffness</li><li>• headaches</li><li>• increased appetite</li><li>• strange thoughts, such as feeling paranoid</li><li>• misunderstanding things around you, such as seeing things that aren't really there</li><li>• easily upset</li></ul>
<b>Day 7 -28</b> (symptoms start to settle down, although some still occur)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• mood swings, alternating between feeling anxious, irritable or agitated, to feeling flat, a bit depressed and run down</li><li>• disturbed sleep</li><li>• cravings for speed</li><li>• feeling bored</li><li>• increased appetite</li></ul>
<b>1 to 3 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• return of normal sleep, mood and activity levels</li><li>• major improvements in general health and mood</li></ul>

So now you know what to expect, ***plan ahead*** – there are things that you can do which might help you through what is likely to be a hard time. The first thing you should do is to think hard about what is involved in going without speed. If speed has been a big part of your life for some time, then your life is going to change when it is missing. What things will you miss about not using? How is using affecting you and how could your life be better if you were not using? Make a list of all the things you like and don't like about using speed. This list can be an important reminder of all the reasons for stopping.

***MAKE A LIST OF ALL THE THINGS YOU LIKE AND DON'T LIKE ABOUT SPEED***

***GOOD THINGS***

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

***NOT SO GOOD THINGS***

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
-

# «EDICATION»

There is no magic pill that is going to take away all the symptoms when you stop. Rohypnol, Valium, cannabis, a hit of smack or a bottle of bourbon might make you feel a bit better for a while, but be careful about how many pills you use or how much alcohol you drink while you're coming off speed, or you might end up swapping habits. Don't forget – withdrawal means your body is learning to function without speed ... large doses of other drugs delay this process. If you feel that pills are the only way you can get through this period, don't take them for more than a week at a time or you may find that you have problems trying to get to sleep without them. It is also worth pointing out that, just like heroin and speed, you can become addicted to pills. Try to find a doctor who you trust, and talk to him/her about what pills will best help you and for how long you should take them.



## ***PLANNING A SAFE, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT***

---

Find a place where people around you will not be using speed, or hassling you for money or drugs. If that means going to a relative's or a friend's house for a week or so while you get through the worst of it, then do that. If you stay at home, then spread the word that you are having a break and people should stay away for a while – not for ever, just for a few weeks. Make sure there are no drugs or drug equipment left in the house to tempt you. The other important thing is to get at least one person who you trust, a person who you know will be supportive, will spend time with you, will help you through the hard times and enlist that person's help over the next few weeks. This support person should not be a dealer or someone who will want you to score for them. This person might be a relative, an old friend from before your drug days, a good doctor or community nurse, or a NA "sponsor". Explain to your support person(s) what is going on, how you're going to be feeling, and what they can do to support you. If you don't explain it to them, they are not going to be able to help you. Reading this booklet might be helpful for them. The role of these support people is to get you over the feelings of isolation, loneliness, depression and boredom. If your partner uses, you may consider giving up together – you can both stop at the same time, make an agreement not to buy speed, and change your lifestyle together.



## ***COPING WITH CRAVINGS***

---

- ❑ “cravings” are urges to use drugs. They are a normal part of any addiction, and everyone gets them during withdrawal, even though some people may be unsure about what they are experiencing
- ❑ cravings are **NOT** caused by a lack of willpower or motivation, and they don’t mean that the withdrawal is not working
- ❑ cravings are not constant; they come and go and vary in intensity. Cravings are only really severe for short periods of time - usually less than one hour, and then they settle down to a more bearable level
- ❑ cravings can be triggered by physical or psychological discomfort. You will have cravings as you go through uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms, but as you start to get over the withdrawal, the cravings become fewer and easier to deal with
- ❑ you will get more cravings if something or someone upsets you, or if the opportunity to use or score comes up. So if you really want to get through this withdrawal, the safest thing is to avoid these high risk situations for a while
- ❑ you may still experience cravings even after you have gone through withdrawal, but they usually become easier to cope with after withdrawal because you are generally feeling much better. The longer you can go without using, the less severe the cravings become. It is a little like a stray cat - if you feed it, it will come back, but if you don’t, it will eventually go away

It is really important that you be aware that **you are going to get cravings**, so you can be prepared for them. Different people have different ways of coping. Remember, cravings are only severe for short periods of time - then the severity of the craving reduces to a level that is easier to manage. The goal is to get through the severe period. Many people find the “three **D**’s” helpful: ***delay, distract, decide.***

## 1 DELAY the decision as to whether you will use for one hour

When a craving is severe, the big question is, “Am I going to use?” Everyone who experiences cravings goes through the struggle between the desire to use and the desire to remain drug free. The more you try to battle this out, the more anxious you become and the more intense craving becomes. Delay the decision - make a deal with yourself that you will put it off for one hour. Don't try to decide one way or the other. You may use, you may not ... that is something you can decide after an hour. By breaking your withdrawal up into short periods in this way, it becomes more manageable. In other words, take it one day, or even one hour if necessary, at a time. If you are convincing yourself that “I am never using ever again”, that can seem like a very large challenge. Rather think, “I will decide whether I use again in one hour”.

## 2 DISTRACT yourself with some activity during this hour

Cravings can occupy your thoughts completely, and because they do, they seem to worsen. The only way to avoid this is by putting your energy into other things, like maybe listening to your favourite CD, watching TV or a video, cleaning out the fridge or the bathroom, talking to someone (but not about drugs), going for a walk with someone “safe” (drug-free). Remember, concentration can be difficult during withdrawal, so don't try anything complicated during this hour or you may become frustrated.

## 3 DECIDE whether it is worth it to use after the hour is up

At the end of the hour, although it may not have gone away, the craving should have settled down, particularly if you are good at distracting yourself. Before you make the final decision go over in your mind all the reasons why you want to stop using, why you are trying to withdraw, and most importantly, what you will be returning to if you get back into using again. Look back at the list of the pros and cons that you wrote at the start of your detox.

**Remember: no-one uses just because they have cravings - they only return to using because of the way they deal with the cravings.**

## ASK YOURSELF, *WHAT THINGS WILL I DO TO HELP ME STAY OFF SPEED?*

### COPING WITH A LAPSE

Learning to reduce or stop speed use is trial and error. Most people slip up along the way. This is normal. Slip-ups are NOT failures. They do not mean that you have lost control. They are important opportunities for learning. If you use when you do not want to or use more when you only want a little, take time to think about why. What led to the slip? In hindsight how could you have avoided the slip? What will you do next time in a similar situation? By learning from slip-ups you will prevent lapses turning into binges and returning to old patterns of use.

---

Disclaimer: All information contained in this booklet was correct at the time of publication. ©1996, NDARC, UNSW  
Authors: L. Topp, R. McKetin, J. Hando & P. Dillon. Updated in 2009 by R. McKetin. Edited by K. Haworth

ISBN: 0-7334-1791-4

Acknowledgments: Parts of this guide were also taken from: Wickes, W. (1992) Amphetamines and other psychostimulants: A guide to the management of users, Canberra, AGPS; and Lintzeris, N., Dunlop, A. & Thornton, D. (1996) Getting through amphetamine withdrawal, Melbourne, Turning Point Drug and Alcohol Centre Inc. Helpful comments were made by Dr Nick Lintzeris, Dr Amanda Baker, Dr Wendy Wickes, Professor Wayne Hall, Dr Andrew Churchill, Dr Linda Gowing, Timothy Moore, Dr Jason White, Sandra Sunjic, Associate Professor Steve Allsop, Lib Edmonds and Tamaris Cameron. A special thanks to the many speed users who provided valuable feedback on this booklet, and to those who have participated in our research over the years.

For a list of other booklets available from MDARC Education Trust and more information on the work of NDARC, visit [www.med.unsw.edu.au/ndarc](http://www.med.unsw.edu.au/ndarc)