

Stimulants

Ways to reduce harms



Firstly, a few key things to know about stimulants...

- Stimulants work by causing a large release of 'dopamine', which is the brain's pleasure chemical.
- Using stimulants over long periods of time depletes the brain's natural stores of dopamine, causing people to feel flat, sad and unmotivated.
- They impact sleep and appetite, which your body needs to function well.
- If you use stimulants regularly you're likely to build a tolerance quickly, meaning you will need more and more to feel the same effects.

It's important to know that there is no safe level of non-prescribed stimulant use.

The following questions refer to non-prescribed stimulant use only.

Would you try any of these strategies below? (or maybe you do them already?)	Yes	Maybe	No
Setting limits on how much you will use each day/week/month?			
Choosing a time to use stimulants that least impacts daily tasks/responsibilities or likelihood of lost sleep?			
Getting advice from a trusted peer before trying a new substance or batch?			
If using a new non-pharmaceutical batch, trying a little bit first then waiting before having more?			
Eating healthily including fruit, vegetables and protein-rich foods like meat and eggs?			
Eating before using, and have healthy foods that are easy to swallow ready and available (such as fruit, soups, yoghurt, smoothies, cereal + milk etc) for after you have used?			
Staying hydrated by drinking water and limiting your alcohol intake?			
Having someone around (or someone you could quickly contact) if you find yourself in trouble who is able to get help in an emergency?			
Having regular breaks to allow your body and mind to rest and recover?			
Maintaining good personal hygiene including regular showering and teeth-brushing?			
If you have stimulants and/or drug equipment at home, storing them safely out of reach of children and pets?			
If injecting, making sure you have your own sterile equipment?			
Staying connected to a supportive network (i.e. people who positively encourage you and do things other than use)?			



Sleep

Know when it's time to take a break from using. If you can't sleep, try to have some downtime. Be careful using too much alcohol, opioids or benzos (sleeping pills) to help you sleep as there is a risk of overdose from these drugs once the stimulant wears off.



Mind your head

Some people who use stimulants can experience anxiety, low mood or feel 'scattered'. Another effect of stimulant use can be strange or paranoid thoughts or hallucinations. Pay attention to your body, mind and emotions and take a break if you notice any of these effects, which usually resolve after having some rest or sleep.

If you experience intense or persistent paranoia and/or hallucinations, seek immediate help by calling triple zero '000' or going to your nearest hospital emergency department.



Do you use cannabis while on stimulants?

Be careful. For some people, cannabis use can increase feelings of anxiety or paranoia or make psychotic symptoms worse.



Do you use regular medications?

Sometimes stimulants can affect how these medicines work. Check the medicine packet and/or ask your doctor.



Practice safe sex

Carry and use condoms and access regular STI testing, especially whenever you start having sex with a new partner.



Stimulants and driving

Whilst stimulants can decrease levels of tiredness and fatigue, they can also impair your coordination, including how well you judge distance and speed. It is also illegal to drive under the influence of illicit or unprescribed stimulants.

Roadside drug tests can detect methamphetamine in your saliva for up to 2 days after use, and cocaine up to one day after use, noting that factors such as how much you've taken, potency and your body's metabolism can affect whether or not you return a positive result.

When withdrawing or 'coming down' from stimulants, you are more likely to feel tired, fatigued, anxious and irritable, which can reduce your ability to drive safely.

Are you pregnant, breastfeeding or parenting?

Using any substance when planning a pregnancy, pregnant, or while breastfeeding can affect your baby's body and brain development. Talk to a medical professional for advice.

Substance use can affect your children and others around you. Ensure your children remain safe and supervised at all times. Make a plan prior to using and be prepared for the hangover/comedown in advance.

N.B. Sleeping with a child in the same bed while under the influence of substances can be particularly dangerous.

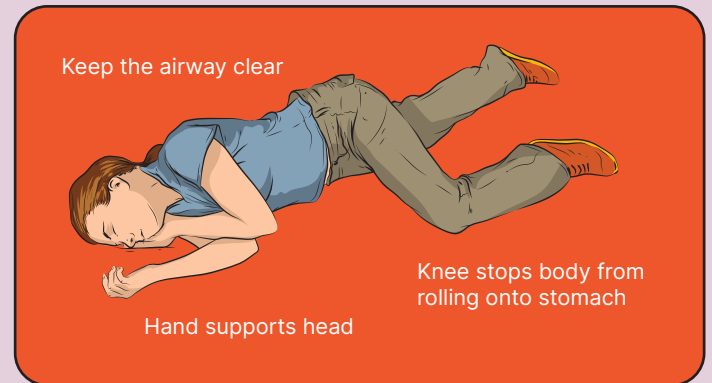
Responding to a stimulant overdose

Signs of a stimulant overdose include:

- Severe headaches
- Chest pain / difficulty breathing
- Unsteady walking
- Nausea and vomiting
- Tremors, spasms or seizures
- Feeling very agitated or panicky
- Seeing or hearing things that aren't really there

If this occurs, seek assistance immediately by calling triple zero (000) and ask for 'AMBULANCE'. If someone is unconscious and breathing, turn them on their side in the recovery position. If they are not breathing, perform CPR if you are able to and wait with them until help arrives.

Unfortunately, there's no way to reverse a stimulant overdose, unless treated/sedated by medical professionals. The effects have to wear off over time.



What would be signs that your stimulant use is becoming more of a problem? When would you know it's time to take a break and/or seek help?

