

▶ Running on empty

The speed scene has undergone *major* changes in recent years with the resurgence of meth and a renewed interest in stimulants as a medical treatment for obesity and attention-deficit disorder.

Not only that, but the definition of what speed is and what it isn't has been subject to revision as lookalikes and act-alikes and legal herbal stimulants have come and gone and come around again.

But one thing *hasn't* changed and isn't likely to. That's the idea that over-amping on speed — any type of speed — is a pretty risky way to live your life.

And while it continues to be stylish to look like you've never lusted after a leftover, and fatiguelessness might rank right alongside cleanliness and godliness in your pantheon of personal values, you might also want to rethink your priorities if you think you need speed to put you where you want to be.

Because one other fact about speed that hasn't changed over the years is still the most important fact of all: Speed kills.

And what it doesn't kill, it burns out. Pass it on. ■



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Crystal Meth



▶ Tweak's Mystique

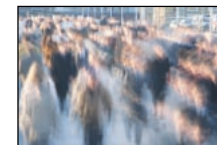
■ A Do It Now Foundation Publication by Jim Parker

▶ Fast times in Century 21

A basic premise in America is that faster is better. From instant energy drinks to instant messaging, speed dialing to speed dating, if there's a way to do something faster, we'll figure out how to do it, and not miss a beat, or a coffee break, in the bargain.

Maybe that's why stimulant drugs hold so much fascination for us all.

Speed seems as American as mom and apple pie — maybe even more so, since today mom is on a diet and the only



apple pie in town is made by machines.

But speedy drugs *aren't* Mom's apple pie, not by a long shot. They're a complex group of chemicals with one thing in common: They can cause all sorts of problems for people who use them — and *all kinds* of people are using various forms of speed today.

And not only are lots of people doing speed, they're often using its most hypercharged form — crystal meth — and running into problems they never expected.

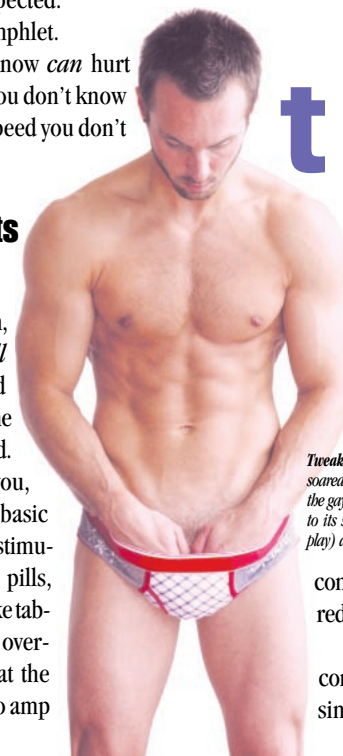
That's why we've put together this pamphlet.

Because sometimes what you don't know *can* hurt you. And that's true times two when what you don't know about is speed. And truer, still, when the speed you don't know about *or* need is crystal meth.

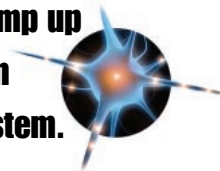
▶ Fast facts

Before we say much about crystal and "real" types of speed, though, we'll start by lumping together *all* stimulants — controlled substances and everyday chemicals like caffeine — under the general classification of "real" speed.

If that sounds wierd to you, we should explain that a basic property shared by *all* stimulants — prescription diet pills, over-the-counter stay-awake tablets, caffeinated colas or the over-priced Mocha Latté grande at the local Starbucks — is their ability to amp



1 property shared by all stimulants is their ability to amp up the action of neurons in the central nervous system.



up the action of neurons in the central nervous system.

They all do it in similar ways, too.

In fact, stimulants differ only to the *degree* that they act in the brain and the *extent* to which they affect behavior — increasing alertness and confidence (or anxiety), decreasing appetite and fatigue.

And while it's hard to find fault with wanting to eat less and stay awake more, wanting to do either behind a constant regimen of prescription amphetamines or crystal meth can be a bigger problem than being overweight or tired.

Way bigger.



▶ Crystal myths

The most potent form of speed available, with or without a prescription, is *methamphetamine*, A.K.A. *crystal*, *crank*, *tweak*, *go-fast*, and dozens of other names.

In medicine, it comes in tablet form, as the prescription drug, Desoxyn®.

Most often, though, it's cooked in makeshift labs and sold as a powder, which is injected, snorted, or swallowed. Smokeable forms of crystal, called "ice," "gak," and "glass," are also used.

Tweak peak. Although meth use has soared among most groups, it's hit the gay community hard, mostly due to its status as a "PnP" (party-and-play) drug of choice.

Widely available as a prescription and street drug in the 1960's, meth use faded in the '70s as controls were tightened on legal production, which reduced its diversion onto the black market.

But in the 1990's, crystal made an amazing comeback. And it's been back in a big way ever since.

The result? Meth became a hot new high to a new generation of users too young to know firsthand — or to have *heard* secondhand — about the downside of amphetamines.

And *what* a downside they have. Risks run so high because the drugs work so well at overamping the central nervous system and zapping feelings of hunger and fatigue. A common result is the sort of physical stress that follows any extreme exertion — like, say, bridge jumping, or skydiving.



But instead of giving the old body/mind a chance to chill between jumps (like any self-respecting bungee-jumping skydiver would do), amphetamine users can extend “runs” for days or weeks, without food *or* rest, putting impossible demands on their bodies and brains.

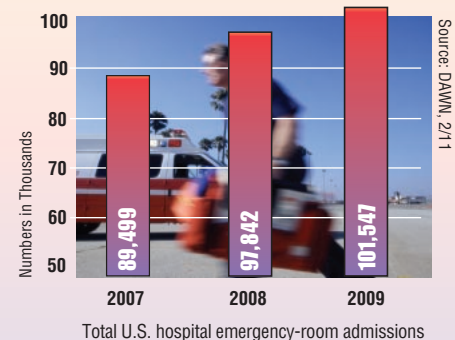
For needle users, add in the hazards that come with injecting *any* drug. And for users who smoke the drug, multiply by the still largely-unknown risk factor of exposing lung tissue to vaporized meth crystals.

That’s why it’s not a big mystery that you don’t run into many old speed freaks in the real world.

They don’t live long enough to *get* old.

▶ Crash Landings

U.S. Amphetamine Emergencies Surge



Over the top. Emergency room admissions involving meth and other forms of amphetamine have soared to record levels in recent years, reflecting high levels of use — and high levels of risk.

▶ A.K.A. ‘crank’

Know the difference between crystal and crank? “Crystal” has seven letters, “crank” only has five. Once used to distinguish down-and-dirty bootleg meth from its crystal-clean sibling, “crank” has become a generic term for all forms of speed.

And that includes the tablets and capsules that find their way out of the local pharmacy and onto the street.

At this point, we’ll add other speedy drugs to the mix, including non-amphetamine prescription stimulants (like Ritalin® and phentermine), and older non-crystal forms of street speed, like “white cross,” and “black beauties.”

Effects match up, in most ways, to the effects of meth. Dangers are similar, too, although oral use carries fewer short-term risks, since the risk of lung or injection-site damage and overdose is reduced or eliminated.



Toxic wasteland. Meth labs are so toxic that biohazard crews are called to decontaminate “cooking” sites, as soon as they’re uncovered.

Still, a speed habit of *any* kind is a hazardous hobby for a lot of reasons, including simple wear and tear on the body and mind.

In a lot of ways, the human body is like a Timex watch—built to take a licking and keep on ticking. Still, we aren’t *exactly* indestructible. And speed, more than any other drug group, pushes the mind and body faster and further than either was meant to go.

The long-term physical toll can be massive, including any or all of the following:

- ▶ **Vitamin and mineral deficiencies.**
- ▶ **Lowered resistance to disease.**
- ▶ **Organ damage** (particularly to the lungs, liver, and kidneys) after long-term use.

And as if the physical hazards aren’t bad enough, there’s a *ton* of mind-and-mood problems that speed can bring on, or worsen. Examples:

- ▶ **Anxiety, depression, and chronic fatigue.**
- ▶ **Delusions.** (Thinking you’re being watched by enemies or police, for example—unless you *are* being watched by the police, which is even worse.)
- ▶ **Toxic psychosis** after prolonged, heavy use.

It’s not a **big** mystery that you don’t run into a lot of old speed freaks in the real world. They don’t live long enough to **get** old.



And that’s still only *part* of the story, because amphetamines also cause a serious form of dependency, which means that giving up speed can be a difficult process.

One reason why is that ex-users get depressed. Life without Mr. Crystal/Crank/Tweak/Go-Fast goosing up the juice in the brain can seem dull, indeed, to a suddenly-straight ex-speed freak.



▶ Other speedy stuff

because of their risks, you might think that amphetamines would have disappeared as medical drugs by now. But you’d be wrong.

Because prescription speed is back on the medical beat big time, and getting bigger all the time.

Dexedrine®, **Adderall®** (dextroamphetamine), and **Ritalin®** (methylphenidate) are used by millions of Americans every day to treat attention-deficit disorder.

Others take a prescription appetite suppressant, **phen-termine**, which used to form half of the diet-drug duo, “fen-phen.” (The other half, *fenfluramine*, was pulled off the market in 1997, due to health risks linked to it.) Now phentermine’s a solo act.

Taken at prescribed doses, Ritalin, Dexedrine, and phentermine usually aren’t dangerous. Still, they’re *real* forms of speed, too, and deserve all the respect you can give them.

And don’t forget over-the-counter **energy drinks**, which look and act (vaguely) like amphetamines, but contain only caffeine and another legal stimulant, guarana.

Still, just because the drinks are legal doesn’t mean they’re safe. They’re not — not always, anyway.

Most contain giga-jolts of caffeine (up to 500 mg per can), which *can* cause problems (even stroke or cardiac arrest) when overused — or used *at all* by people who are hypersensitive to individual ingredients.

■ Life After Meth: How to Get Off Speed

So what if your interest in speed goes beyond simple curiosity? What if you already *have* a problem—or someone you care about has a problem? Begin by admitting the truth. It’s hard to overcome anything until you recognize it for what it is. Then do something about it—or help the other person do something: Namely, quit.

Since the main pull amphetamines have on users is psychological, the biggest barrier you’ll need to overcome is yourself. Here are two ways around common speed-recovery pitfalls:

▶ **Depression.** Expect to feel more down than up, especially during the first few weeks or months. Just don’t let depression surprise you or beat you. Recognize funky feelings for what they are—the effects of withdrawal—and keep on staying straight.

▶ **Anxiety.** When you look at your life, you may find more to be bummed than buzzed about. Your body may carry some scars of speed use, either from disease or from general disrepair. Your head may be worse. Don’t panic. The body and mind have a remarkable ability to heal themselves—especially if you help them along.

So do what you have to do to pull yourself back together. Find another way to generate the energy and excitement that you used to get from speed. See a doctor if you suspect health problems, and visit a treatment program if you think you can’t do it alone. But do it—and keep it done.

And do it **now**. It’s never going to get easier than it already is—and, sometimes, it gets a whole lot worse. ■



Kicking It. Lose the blues that kick in when you quit by getting busy and staying straight.