

# PRESCRIBE CHANGE

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## KNOW THE DANGERS OF STIMULANTS & POLYSUBSTANCE USE

### What is a stimulant drug?

The term stimulants cover a broad class of drugs that increase the activity of the central nervous system. These drugs are used by a very high percentage of the general population for various reasons, including performance enhancement, medical benefits, and recreational purposes. The drug may be legal or illegal, depending on the stimulant and jurisdiction.



**Methamphetamine** A stimulant drug usually used as a white, bitter-tasting powder or a pill. Crystal meth is a form of the drug that looks like glass fragments or shiny, bluish-white rocks. Commonly swallowed, snorted, smoked, or injected, short-term effects include increased wakefulness and physical activity; decreased appetite; increased breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, temperature; and irregular heartbeat. Long term effects can include anxiety, confusion, insomnia, mood problems, violent behavior, paranoia, hallucinations, delusions, weight loss, severe dental problems, and intense itching leading to skin sores from scratching.



**Cocaine** A powerfully addictive stimulant drug made from the leaves of the coca plant native to South America. Although health care providers can use it for valid medical purposes, such as local anesthesia for some surgeries, cocaine is an illegal drug. As a street drug, cocaine looks like a fine, white, crystal powder. Street dealers often mix it with things like cornstarch, talcum powder, or flour to increase profits. They may also mix it with other drugs such as the stimulant amphetamine.



**Xylazine** A non-opioid veterinary tranquilizer not approved for human use, has been linked to an increasing number of overdose deaths nationwide. Xylazine may be added to street drugs, at least in part, to extend the effects of fentanyl. The main effect of xylazine is heavy sedation, so the person who has overdosed will likely be unresponsive. When xylazine is found in combination with fentanyl, the signs and symptoms can include blue/grayish skin and slowed breathing and heart rate. Naloxone will not reverse the effects of xylazine. However, because xylazine is often used with opioids like fentanyl, naloxone should still be given. It's important to call 911 for additional medical treatment, especially since the effects of xylazine may continue after naloxone is given.



**Fentanyl** A synthetic opioid often mixed into or sold as other drugs, such as heroin, cocaine, or counterfeit pills. Using a drug that has been contaminated with or replaced by fentanyl can greatly increase one's risk of overdose. Fentanyl is being laced in heroin, marijuana and cocaine, and is being pressed into illegally manufactured pills.

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# In 2019, nearly half of drug overdose deaths involved multiple drugs (*polysubstance*).

## What is Polysubstance (mixed substance) Use?

The use of more than one drug, also known as polysubstance use, is common. This includes when two or more are taken together or within a short time period, either intentionally or unintentionally. Intentional polysubstance use occurs when a person takes a drug to increase or decrease the effects of a different drug or wants to experience the effects of the combination. Unintentional polysubstance use occurs when a person takes drugs that have been mixed or cut with other substances, like fentanyl, without their knowledge. Whether intentional or not, mixing drugs is never safe because the effects from combining drugs may be stronger and more unpredictable than one drug alone, and even deadly.

### Mixing Stimulants

Stimulants (also known as uppers) can increase your heart rate and blood pressure to dangerous levels and increase your risk of several serious health problems. Combining stimulants may even directly or indirectly increase your risk of brain injury, liver damage, heart attack, and stroke.

Signs of use/overdose that may occur when mixing stimulants include fast/troubled breathing, increased body temperature, nausea or vomiting, chest pain, and seizures or tremors.

### Mixing Stimulants & Depressants

Mixing stimulants and depressants doesn't balance or cancel them out. In fact, the results of combining drugs are unpredictable, often modifying or even masking the effects of one or both drugs. This may trick you into thinking that the drugs are not affecting you, making it easier to overdose.

### Drinking alcohol while using other drugs

Drinking alcohol while using other drugs isn't safe. Alcohol is a depressant with similar effects to other downers. Mixing alcohol with other drugs can increase your risk of overdose and serious damage to the brain, heart, and other organs.

### Mixing Depressants

Depressants (also known as downers) can slow down your breathing and increase your risk of several adverse health outcomes. Combining depressants can also directly or indirectly increase your risk of damage to the brain and other organs, overdose, and death.

Signs of use/overdose when mixing depressants include slow breathing, weak pulse, altered mental status or confusion, and loss of consciousness.

## How to respond to an overdose:

**Step 1:** Rouse and stimulate

**Step 2:** Call 911

**Step 3:** Give Naloxone

**Step 4:** Rescue breathing

**Step 5:** Care for the individual until help arrives

**DO NOT** Use ice to cool down body

**DO NOT** Put person in bath/shower

**DO NOT** Hit/slap or burn fingers/feet

**DO NOT** Give drink/induce vomiting

**DO NOT** Inject person with cocaine, salt water, milk, or epinephrine

