



ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE IN AVIATION

METHAMPHETAMINE

What is methamphetamine? The term 'amphetamine' refers to a family of synthetic drugs that are all chemically related to amphetamine and all have quite similar effects.

Currently in Australia amphetamine comes in many different forms and users refer to it by many different names including speed, goey, crystal, crystal meth, base, pure, ice, shabu and ox blood. No matter what form it comes in, almost all speed available in Australia today is methamphetamine. Methamphetamine is slightly different in chemical terms to amphetamine, but the two have very similar effects.

Tablets that are prescribed for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), such as Dexamphetamine, Duromine and Ritalin, are occasionally used by methamphetamine users for their stimulant properties.

Methamphetamine and safety

The amphetamine family of drugs falls into the class of drugs known as 'stimulants'. Stimulants increase the activity of the central nervous system and produce effects similar to the body's naturally occurring hormone, adrenalin.

Some of the usual side effects of methamphetamine use include increased risk-taking, motor restlessness, aggression, disorientation and lack of coordination, all of which have a potential impact on safety. It has also been argued that the rebound fatigue following lengthy periods of methamphetamine use presents a considerable risk to road safety.

Long-term and short-term effects of methamphetamine

The short-term effects of using methamphetamine may include:

- euphoria and a sense of wellbeing
- increased alertness, energy and hyperactivity
- talkativeness
- reduced appetite
- improved concentration
- dry mouth and a metallic taste in the mouth
- increased blood pressure and heart rate
- nausea.

The long-term effects of using methamphetamine may include:

- sleep problems
- extreme mood swings
- compulsive repetition of actions
- paranoia
- depression and anxiety
- panic attacks
- seizures
- social and financial problems.

One of the greatest problems experienced by amphetamine users is amphetamine-induced psychosis or 'speed psychosis'. The symptoms of speed psychosis are similar to those of paranoid schizophrenia, and may include:

- hallucinations
- paranoid delusions
- uncontrolled violent behaviour.

These symptoms usually disappear after the drug has been eliminated from the body, although the user remains vulnerable to further episodes. If the drug is used again, the psychosis may recur.

Aviation workplace requirements

In accordance with Civil Aviation Safety Regulation Part 99, personnel who perform, or are available to perform, safety-sensitive aviation activities are subject to random alcohol and other drug (AOD) testing.

Testing may be conducted to detect the presence of amphetamines or amphetamine-type stimulants.

For testable drugs, the permitted level is a concentration of the testable drug in 100 mls of blood that is less than the confirmatory target concentration for that drug specified in Table 5.1 of the Australian Standard 4760-2006.

The aim of the testing program is preventative, not punitive. However, the regulations provide for a suitable enforcement regime to deal with personnel whose tests return confirmed readings over the permitted levels for drugs or alcohol.

Community support services

Alcohol and Drug Information Service

Each state and territory has an AOD information telephone service. Many operate 24 hours and offer a free-call number for people living in regional areas.

Australian Capital Territory
24 Hour Alcohol and Drug Telephone Line
02 6207 9977

New South Wales
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
02 9361 8000 or 1800 422 599 (rural)

Northern Territory
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
1800 131 350

Queensland
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
07 3236 2414 or 1800 177 833 (rural)

South Australia
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
1300 13 13 40

Tasmania
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
1800 811 994 (24 hour)

Victoria
DirectLine
1800 888 236

DrugInfo
1300 85 85 84

Family Drug Helpline
1300 660 068

Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS Line)
03 9418 1020 or 1800 014 446 (rural)

Western Australia
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
08 9442 5000 or 1800 198 024 (rural)

Parent Drug Information Service
08 9442 5050 or 1800 653 203 (rural)

CASA contacts
CASA has established a virtual resource centre on AOD in the Australian aviation sector, providing comprehensive policy and program advice, resources for education and training purposes, self-assessment tools, links to useful documents and services, and a range of other materials. The website can be found at www.casa.gov.au/aod.

CASA AOD Program Manager
The Program Manager for the CASA AOD initiative can be contacted at aod@casa.gov.au.