

## General Classification

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Uppers are Central Nervous System stimulants.

The seven principal stimulants are:

- cocaine (including “crack”);
- amphetamines;
- amphetamine congeners (e.g., Ritalin and diet pills);
- lookalike or over-the-counter stimulants;
- miscellaneous plant stimulants;
- caffeine; and
- nicotine.

## Tobacco & Nicotine

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- Nicotine (tobacco) is the most addicting psychoactive drug. In the United States, at least 46 million people are addicted to cigarettes compared to the 15 million addicted to alcohol.
- Nicotine addiction causes more deaths than all other psychoactive drugs combined.
- One of the main reasons for tobacco’s addictive nature, besides the slight stimulation it gives, is the need for the smoker’s body to maintain a certain level of nicotine in the blood to avoid severe withdrawal symptoms.
- Besides shortening a person’s life span, tobacco lowers the quality of life.
- Smokeless tobacco is as addicting and as damaging as tobacco that is smoked.
- Lawsuits brought by state and federal governments in the United States, as well as individual or class action suits, are being won against the tobacco companies for increasing the addictive nature of their products and for the health damage caused by smoking.

# Uppers

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Educational Series*

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## General Effects

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- By increasing chemical and electrical activity in the CNS, stimulants increase energy, raise heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration; they make the user more alert, active, confident, anxious, restless, aggressive, and less hungry.
- Uppers cause many of the effects by forcing the release of energy chemicals.
- Most problems with stimulants occur when the body isn't given time to recover and its energy supply becomes depleted. The user can fall into a severe depression.
- Cardiovascular side effects can include heart arrhythmias, constricted blood vessels, and heart disease.
- Another set of problems with the stronger stimulants comes when the stimulated reward/pleasure center does not signal the need for food, drink, or sexual stimulation, resulting in malnutrition, dehydration, or a reduced sex drive.
- Since stimulants reduce appetite almost all of them are used to reduce weight, often causing various health problems.
- Though stimulants initially increase confidence and induce a certain euphoria, excessive use of the stronger stimulants can cause severe neurotransmitter imbalance. A user can become paranoid, have muscle tremors, become aggressive, and even become psychotic.

## Cocaine

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- Cocaine is noted for the intensity of its stimulation, its high price, and the speed with which it is metabolized in the body. It produces an intense craving and is highly addictive.

- The coca leaf is chewed and the stimulating juice is absorbed through the stomach in 15–30 minutes. The refined cocaine hydrochloride can be snorted (2–5 minutes), injected (15–30 seconds), or drunk (15–30 minutes). Cocaine freebase (“crack,” “rock”) is smoked. Smoking is the fastest route to the brain, 7–10 seconds.
- Cocaine is a topical anesthetic and is used for medical procedures, such as eye surgery, or to desensitize the pain of skin lesions.
- Cocaine mimics and intensifies natural body functions and highs. The comedown is equally intense, so the user keeps taking the drug to stay up. The brain becomes desensitized to the memory of the pleasurable effects.
- Cocaine initially delays orgasm and so, are taken to try and enhance sexual activity but prolonged use eventually causes sexual dysfunction including a decrease in orgasm.
- Cocaine, especially when used in combination with alcohol, can precipitate violence, often domestic violence.
- Cocaine can also cause heart damage and damage to the fetus of a pregnant user.
- Tolerance develops rapidly causing severe psychic dependence.
- An overdose of cocaine can be the result of as little as 1/50 of a gram or as much as 1.2 grams or more. Most overdose reactions are not fatal but death can come from cardiac arrest, respiratory depression, and seizures.
- Cocaine is often used in conjunction with other drugs.
- The compulsion to use cocaine is often caused by the desire to experience natural body functions such as extra energy, confidence, alertness, and euphoria artificially. The desire to escape mental pain and overcome a sense of hopelessness also makes a person use. People continue using because body chemistry has been changed by the drug, thus creating a compulsion to use.

## Amphetamines

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- Amphetamines are very similar to cocaine, the main difference being that they are synthetic, longer acting, and cheaper to buy.
- Amphetamines were originally prescribed to fight exhaustion, depression, narcolepsy, asthma, some forms of epilepsy, and obesity but were often taken for their mood-elevating euphoric properties.
- Prolonged use of amphetamines can induce paranoia, heart and blood vessel problems, twitches, increased body temperature, dehydration, and malnutrition.
- Tolerance develops rapidly with amphetamines. Amphetamine withdrawal causes physical and emotional depression, extreme irritability, nervousness, anergia (lack of energy), anhedonia (lack of pleasure), and craving.

## Caffeine

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- Caffeine, particularly coffee, is the most popular stimulant in the world. Besides coffee, caffeine is found in tea, chocolate (cocoa), caffeinated soft drinks, and a number of over-the-counter products.
- Tolerance can develop with caffeine. Withdrawal symptoms, such as headaches, depression, sleep problems, and irritability do occur, particularly if consumption is more than five cups a day.