Another problem is that mayors of Edge City tend to not stay in office very long, anyway.

The "rush" is also the riskiest time for users, because that's the time when blood pressure and heart rate soar, sometimes completely off the charts.

And **that's** when cocaine is most likely to turn our aforementioned heroes into zeroes and the living into…*you know*.

Spun Cycle

Stimulant drugs do more than produce similar effects. They also cause similar problems.

That's because they make the body run hotter and harder than it's meant to. And you know what happens when you push something too hard for too long: It breaks.

Some problems happen all at once—overdose, for example. Others can take longer.

Since speed zaps appetite so well, the body can run out of the vitamins and minerals it needs to run on and repair itself.

And even though it can draw on stored supplies for a while, when they're used up, serious problems can result.

Teeth and bones lose calcium, and cavities and weakened bones result. The heart, liver, and lungs can also be damaged.

Other problems stem from lack of sleep and changes in brain chemistry that months or years of being "spun" can unleash.

But no matter **where** they come from, some of the psychological problems that speed causes (including violence, paranoia, and mental illness) aren't pretty *or* fun—or easy to get rid of, after the fact.

Thin Air

For a long time, people thought that stimulants somehow created their effects out of thin air.

They were wrong. Speed and cocaine only let you borrow energy from tomorrow (or the day, week, or month after) to use today.

Real energy *has* to come from somewhere, since it doesn't come in pills or powders. Where it comes from is inside the person who's using the drug.

That's one reason so many people get strung out on speed.

They get hooked on energy they're borrowing from the future, from parts of their lives they haven't lived yet, and they burn it all up at once.

And while it might seem like a cool idea to be able to keep bopping and buzzing along for days at a time, if you're not in control of your own body and brain in the present and you're burning up your future, it doesn't matter how fast you're going, because you're not really going anywhere.

Ask anyone who's ever been there, but remember: You don't have to go to know.

Edge City isn't all it's cranked up to be. ■

This is one in a series of publications on drugs, behavior, and health published by Do It Now Foundation. Please call or write for a list of current titles, or check out our web site at **www.doitnow.org**.

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Stimulant Drugs
Speed

A Do It Now/Facts First! Publication by Jim Parker

Bad Mojo in Edge City

YOU SEE IT EVERYWHERE—from the rush to school in the morning to the crush in the cafeteria at lunchtime, through the long afternoon countdown to the final bell.

It seems like all anyone wants is to zip past where they are to get to where they're going next.

That's **not** the reason they call it the human **race**, but it *could* be. Still, it's not altogether bad that things are that way.

If people didn't want to go faster, we'd probably all still be tooling down Main Street like Fred Flintstone, pushing with our feet. Heck, nobody would've bothered inventing the **wheel**, for that matter, so we'd all be *walking*.

And if people didn't like the idea of speed, we probably wouldn't have Roadrunner cartoons or PlayStation2's or a million other things a lot of us consider essential.

On the other hand, the drive to race through life and hang ten at the edge of existence isn't always good, either.

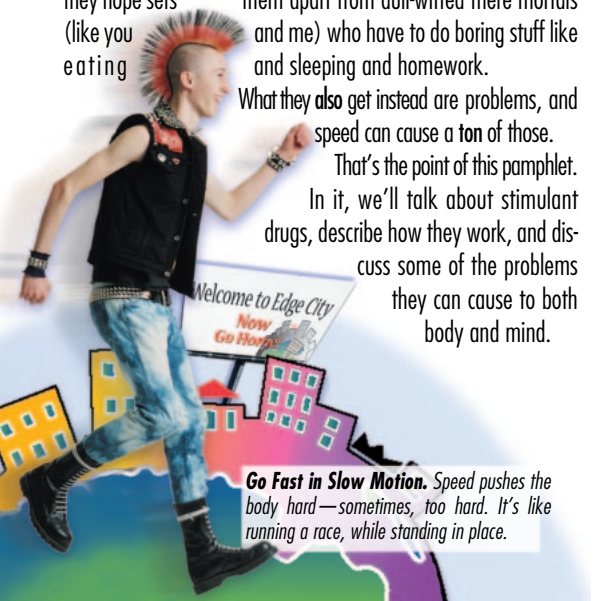
Example? Consider the group of drugs known as "speed." They're the original *who-says-you-can't-have-it-all?* drugs that were supposed to let users burn the candle at both ends *(Watch out for that drip!), and* have their cake and eat it, too. *(Burp!)*

People use them for the same reason they run red lights and put off studying until the night before an exam—because they think they can get away with it.

What they get instead is a short burst of jangled energy that they hope sets them apart from dull-witted mere mortals (like you and me) who have to do boring stuff like eating and sleeping and homework.

What they **also** get instead are problems, and speed can cause a **ton** of those.

That's the point of this pamphlet. In it, we'll talk about stimulant drugs, describe how they work, and discuss some of the problems they can cause to both body and mind.



Go Fast in Slow Motion. *Speed pushes the body hard—sometimes, too hard. It's like running a race, while standing in place.*

Speed makes users feel like the mayor of Edge City: powerful, confident, in charge. The problem is that they're only in office when they're wired…

And stimulants *do* cause their share of problems.

In fact, in many ways and for a lot of people, the only thing that speed really speeds up are problems.

And that's worth considering in a world where you have to choose as fast as you do in this one.

Fast Facts

The word "speed" itself can refer to a number of stimulant drugs, which do just what their name implies: They stimulate (or speed up) the body and brain.

Lots of chemicals have been used throughout history in the quest for fast times, but the Big Three are **caffeine**, **amphetamines**, and **cocaine**.

Caffeine. The most common pick-me-up in the world is caffeine. About a billion people use some form of it every day—maybe even you.

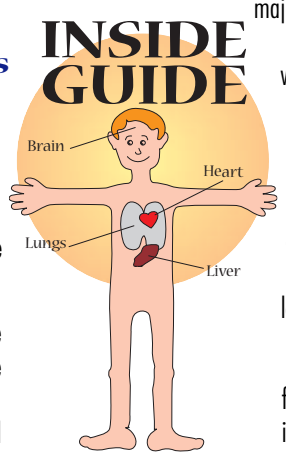
It's a drug that occurs naturally in coffee and chocolate, and one that's added by the ton to colas and other soft drinks for the lift it provides. It's also an ingredient in stay-awake tablets and painkillers.

One reason for its popularity is its mild stimulating effects. But caffeine has a downside, too.

For starters, it makes some people jittery and irritable *(ever hear of "coffee nerves"?)*, and it can also cause sleeplessness.

It's also habit-forming, which means that the first cup of Folgers in the morning (or the first Dr. Pepper) often leads to another *and* another.

Hey, man, can you spare a buck for some Dew?



Organ solo. *Speed pumps up the volume in all body systems and organs, but saves its most serious effects for the brain, heart, lungs, and liver.*

But since its effects are mild and most people tolerate it well, caffeine has earned a permanent place in the hearts and minds of people today.

But it's still a drug. And believe it or not, it's not all *that* different from other forms of speed.

Amphetamines. These are the drugs most people think about when they talk about "speed." And amphetamines *have* gotten a lot of attention lately, thanks mostly to *methamphetamine*—also known as "**crank**" or "**crystal meth**."

It might surprise you, but amphetamines were once considered "wonder drugs." That's because they work so well at blocking hunger and fatigue that no one got around to checking out *how* they work.

When they *did*, doctors linked dozens of problems to the drugs, including too-high blood pressure and heart rate and major vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

When they dug deeper, they found that the drugs work by tilting the balance of chemicals in the brain that regulate attention and mood.

Amphetamines make users feel like the mayor of Edge City itself: powerful, confident, in charge.

The problem is that they only get to stay in office as long as they're wired, and keep taking more speed.

And mayors in Edge City tend not to stay in office long, anyway.

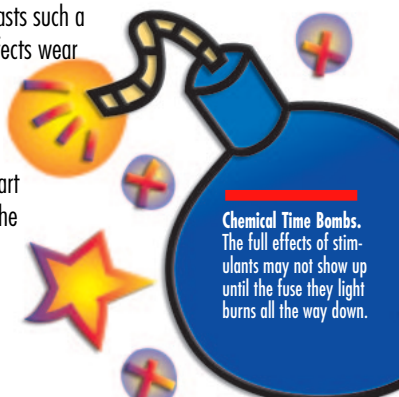
Cocaine. Here's another stimulant drug that's famous for turning heroes into zeroes and the living into the no-longer-living.

Sold as a white powder that's sniffed or injected or as rock-like chunks that are smoked ("crack"), cocaine causes the same basic effects as other forms of speed, but which usually don't last as long.

And even though that might ***seem*** like a good thing, it isn't.

Because cocaine lasts such a short time (crack's effects wear off in **minutes**), users have to **keep** using it to stay high.

And it's the first part of the high—called the "rush"—that hooks most people.



Chemical Time Bombs. The full effects of stimulants may not show up until the fuse they light burns all the way down.