

Quick Reference: Stimulants

for Community Health Workers/Representatives (CHW/Rs)

Overview & Definition¹

Stimulants are substances that speed up the central nervous system (CNS) by flooding the brain with dopamine. Common types include: caffeine, methamphetamine, cocaine, and prescription stimulants (e.g., Adderall®, Ritalin®).

People get stimulants into their body by swallowing, placing under tongue or in cheek, smoking, snorting, injecting, inserting rectally/vaginally.

Health Implications

Intense dopamine surge → reinforcement after use. May make previous pleasurable interactions and activities less so because they don't have the same type of neurobiological reward.

Immediate/Short-term: Feelings of euphoria and alertness. May experience insomnia and engage in risky behaviors.

Long-term: cognitive decline, oral health concerns, depression, psychosis, cardiovascular problems.

State

What you might notice:

Intoxication

Dilated pupils, rapid speech, restlessness, elevated heart rate/blood pressure, chest pain

Withdrawal

Extreme fatigue, depressive mood, increased appetite, vivid dreams

Overramping/overdosing

Severe agitation/paranoia, overheating or excessive sweating, hypertension (high blood pressure), panic or extreme anxiety, psychosis, tremors, irritability, seizures or stroke like symptoms.²
Call 911 right away.



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Overdose Prevention Strategies^{2,3}

- ▶ **Do not use alone:** stagger use with a trusted person.
- ▶ **Test:** drugs for fentanyl; carry naloxone in case of fentanyl contamination.
- ▶ **Hydrate, nourish, rest:** supports recovery between episodes.
- ▶ **Stay cool & monitor overheating:** high body temperature can intensify stimulant related death risk, particularly on hot days.² Hydrate, find shade, use cool cloths or ice packs, and move to fresh air. Stay nearby until help arrives.

Treatment & Recovery

- ▶ **Evidence-based therapies:**
 - Contingency Management – incentives for negative drug screens⁴
 - Motivational Interviewing – client-centered counseling to resolve ambivalence⁵
- ▶ **Levels of care:** outpatient/intensive outpatient, residential, therapeutic communities, peer led recovery support and housing.
- ▶ **Referral pathway:** CHW/Rs can dial **OARLine 1-888-688-4222** or **2-1-1** to locate stimulant-use treatment; follow up within 48 hours to confirm linkage.
- ▶ **No FDA-approved medications** currently available (Rawson, 2023).

References

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