



Drug Fact Sheet

Barbiturates

WHAT ARE BARBITURATES?

Barbiturates are depressants that produce a wide spectrum of central nervous system depression from mild sedation to coma. They also have been used as sedatives, hypnotics, anesthetics, and anticonvulsants.

Barbiturates are classified as:

- Ultrashort, Short, Intermediate, Long-acting

WHAT IS THEIR ORIGIN?

Barbiturates were first introduced for medical use in the 1900s, and today, few substances are in medical use.

What are common street names?

Common street names include:

- Barbs, Block Busters, Christmas Trees, Goof Balls, Pinks, Red Devils, Reds & Blues, and Yellow Jackets

What do they look like?

Barbiturates come in a variety of multicolored pills and tablets. People prefer the short-acting and intermediate barbiturates such as Amytal® and Seconal®.

How are they used?

Barbiturates are used by swallowing a pill or injecting a liquid form. Barbiturates are generally misused to reduce anxiety, decrease inhibitions, and treat unwanted effects of illicit drugs.

Barbiturates can be extremely dangerous because overdoses can occur easily and lead to death.

What is their effect on the mind?

Barbiturates cause:

- Mild euphoria, lack of restraint, relief of anxiety, and sleepiness

Higher doses cause:

- Impairment of memory, judgment, and coordination; irritability; and paranoid and suicidal ideation
- Tolerance develops quickly and larger doses are then needed to produce the same effect, increasing the danger of an overdose.

What is their effect on the body?

Barbiturates slow down the central nervous system and cause sleepiness.

What are their overdose effects?

Effects of overdose include:

- Central nervous system depression, decreased respiration, increased heart rate, decreased blood pressure, decreased urine production, decreased body temperature, coma, and possible death

Which drugs cause similar effects?

Drugs with similar effects include:

- Alcohol, benzodiazepines like Valium® and Xanax®, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, Rohypnol®, and GHB

What is their legal status in the United States?

Barbiturates are Schedule II, III, and IV depressants under the Controlled Substances Act.