

BARBITURATES

Street Names

Barbs, Downers, Blues, Reds, Sekkies, Blue Angels, Blue Devils, Purple Hearts, Goofballs, Red Devils.

Description

Mainly as tablet but can be ampoules, suppositories, capsules or syrups.

Routes of Use

Ingestion or injection.

History

Barbiturates have been used since the start of the century as sedatives (calming effect) and as hypnotics (sleeping pills) and have therefore been termed hypnosedatives. They are manufactured in a variety of different forms. The shorter acting hypnotics are the ones most abused. Misusers take them on their own, with alcohol (another sedative), or injection of the powder. They are not commonly prescribed anymore because of the danger of a fatal overdose so are often replaced by tranquillisers.

Effects People Seek

In small doses barbiturates relax people, whilst in larger doses a drunken effect is produced similar to alcohol. The effect is magnified if taken at the same time as other sedatives, but is extremely dangerous, when a normally safe dose can result in overdose and death.

Other Effects

Lower doses result in a drunken state that can end up with accidental injuries due to falls etc. Death from respiratory failure can occur at larger doses. Death is a potential risk of use because the lethal dose is not much different than the normal dose and this is even lower when taken at the same time as alcohol, tranquillisers or heroin. The danger of injecting barbiturates is extremely dangerous. Apart from the risks of using shared needles and poor injecting techniques there can be an accumulation of undissolved tablets in the skin tissue. Bronchitis, pneumonia and hypothermia can result from heavy use. Withdrawal from the drug has to be taken slowly as rapid withdrawal from high-dose use can be fatal.

Dependence & Tolerance

Physical and psychological dependence is likely especially at higher than normal therapeutic doses.

The Law

Barbiturates, like all sedatives and hypnotics, are prescription only medications under the Medicines Act. People can only possess them if prescribed by a doctor. Illegally obtained Barbiturates are Class B drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971) and therefore it is an offence to supply, produce or allow premises to be used for supply or unauthorised production.