

Speedballs

A guide for people who inject
heroin & crack/cocaine in one shot



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“ You feel the white first, sharpening your mind, boosting your energy, along with that orgasmic surge of pleasure - then within half a minute, the brown kicks in, softening the razor edges of the crack, and soothing your overcharging brain. Your body stops aching, your mind stops hurting, and for a few brief heavenly minutes things are more than just shit or alright. The two drugs go together like men and women, like yin and yang. Why is it the only thing that makes me feel good if all it's doing is killing me? **”**

35 year old speedballer.

Brown and White, Curry and Rice, Snowballing or Speedballing are slang names for the increasingly common practice of shooting up mixtures of heroin and crack (or cocaine powder) together in one shot.

Speedball Heaven

Drugs feel good because they cause the release of a chemical in your brain called dopamine.

Injecting HEROIN almost doubles the level of dopamine in your brain.

Injecting COCAINE boosts the level of dopamine in your brain by about four times.

Injecting a SPEEDBALL boosts dopamine to around ten times normal levels.



x2

Feels good



x4

Feels really good



x10

Feels really fucking good

Injecting speedballs allows each drug to reduce the unpleasant side-effects of the other - heroin takes the stimulant 'edginess' off crack, and crack reduces the fuzzy sedative effects of heroin. Heroin also helps deal with the sudden 'comedown' off crack, but the main reason the drugs are injected together is because it feels pretty damn good. . . at least it does in the beginning.

Speedball Hell

But there is a price to pay for feeling that good

“The average cost of a speedball habit is **£500**”
per week

That's four times the cost of an average heroin-only habit and four times the amount of begging, stealing, borrowing and selling your arse and four times the chances of getting caught. Speedballers are more likely than heroin-only injectors to be homeless, underweight, tired, and mentally ill; and to have damage and disease caused by injection. Speedballers are more likely to catch HIV and Hepatitis and more likely to overdose.

Injecting problems



Crack has a local anaesthetic (numbing) effect at the injection site, and so you're less likely to feel and respond to pain from damaged veins, sores, abscesses, etc.

- *If you notice any swelling, discoloured skin, pus, bad smell or your skin feels hot and/or tender, get it checked out straight away.
- *Most problems can be sorted out if you get help quickly - they won't get better on their own.
- *Missed hits often leave a lump. These usually go after a day or two. If a lump doesn't go, or gets worse, see a doctor.



Vein damage



Try to reduce the amount of time you are 'fishing', 'digging' or generally poking around with the needle before you inject.

Don't 'flush' - you only need to pull the plunger back once to check that you are in a vein.

Ask at your local needle exchange for injection advice



Don't flush

***Don't keep injecting in the same spot. Rotate sites and give your veins a chance to heal.**

***Use as little citric acid powder as you can. Too much will damage veins and cause a burning sensation.**

***Before you inject wash your hands and the place you are going to inject with hot water and soap (use swabs if you don't have anything else)**

***Only use a needle or syringe once - make sure you get enough equipment to last you between visits to your needle exchange.**



"speedballers are more often homeless, which means that many have few options other than to inject in unhygienic and insecure locations (such as derelict houses and public toilets)".

Shooting galleries

The proportion of drug injectors with HIV (the virus that leads to AIDS) has doubled in the last five years.

If you use a shooting gallery it is easy to get your injection equipment mixed up with somebody else's. Try using a syringe marker (available from some needle exchanges) so you don't get mixed up.

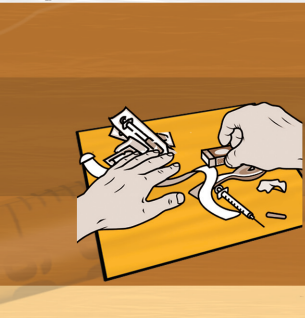
Always use a magazine or tray as a 'clean space'. This is your clean area, just for your equipment - don't allow anybody else's equipment into this space or any of yours out of this clean space.



Safer speedbalking

preparation

1.



Get hold of all-new equipment, and lay it out on a 'clean space'.

2.



Clean your hands and the places where you are going to inject – preferably with soap, hot water and dried on a towel. If these are not available, use hand-wipes and clean injection site with a swab.

3.



Open the bag of heroin powder and empty straight into your own 'clean' cooker, then do the same with citric acid powder or vitamin C powder, using as little as possible*.

*too much will cause burning pain and damage veins – do not use vinegar or lemon juice.

4.



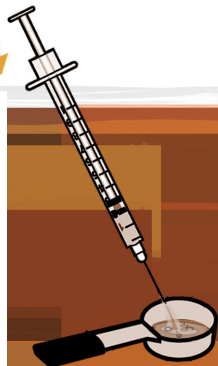
Get a new needle/
syringe from an
unopened packet.
Remove cap.

5.



Draw up sterile water,
using as much water
as possible.
(80% of 1-ml syringe is OK).

6.



Slowly squirt the
sterile water into the
cooker (or spoon).

Bottled water is NOT
sterile. Use either
water amps, or else
boiled water that has
been cooled.

Safer speedballing

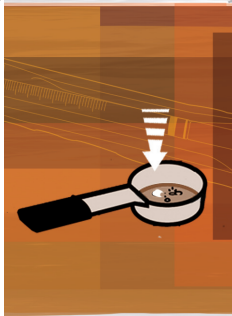
preparation

7.



Heat the solution from underneath, preferably with a lighter, until it is clearly bubbling and the dissolving of powder appears to have reached an end (about 15-30 seconds).

8.



Open the bag/wrap of crack, and drop the rock straight into the solution. Some people prefer to crumble the crack before they add it to the mixture as this helps it dissolve more quickly.

9.



Stir the 'final solution' with a clean stirrer, such as the syringe cap. If the crack is heavily cut with crap, it can be difficult to dissolve. Give it another stir or add a bit more water or citric.

10.



Always use clean filters.

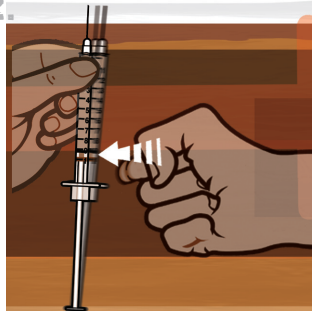
Filters available from needle exchanges are better than cigarette filters.

11.



Using the syringe, carefully pick up a clean filter with the end of the needle, and drop it into the solution; and, with the eye of the needle facing down, draw up all of the solution through the filter.

12.



Tap and squirt any sizable air bubbles out of the barrel (point needle upwards, hold barrel at the top end, and tap the bottom end of barrel) – and flick (don't lick) the end of the needle.

Safer speedballing

injecting

1.

Don't keep injecting in the same place - rotate sites regularly.

Bring up veins by slapping, exercise, hot water/heat, or tourniquet



2.

Get the needle into vein (stab lightly at a narrow angle). Draw back a little - If the blood is bright red STOP and don't inject as you have hit an artery. Blood in veins is dark red.



3.

Make sure you release the tourniquet before you inject.



Injecting into the arms is illustrated. Other methods of injecting are covered in more detail in other Lifeline publications – Better Injecting, Dig, When Things Go Wrong, Going in the Groin.

4.

Press the plunger in as slowly as possible. Keep flushing/booting to absolute minimum. Remove the needle fairly slowly and carefully to avoid damaging the vein.

5.

Use a clean tissue to put finger pressure on site after removing needle (for 20+ seconds, or until bleeding stops). If it doesn't stop bleeding get help.

6.

Clear away all paraphernalia and put used equipment in sharps box.

Return the sharps box to your needle exchange.



Overdose

Overdoses on heroin often involve stopping breathing, while overdoses on crack/cocaine are more likely to lead to heart attacks or fits. Because of this, you may need to do different things to help someone who has overdosed (while waiting for the ambulance). What you should do depends on their appearance and behaviour.



If they are overheating: cool them down by removing outer clothing, and fanning them.

Don't give them anything to eat or drink.

Call an ambulance

If they are having a 'fit' - prevent them from hurting themselves.

Call an ambulance



If they have severe chest pains: sit them up. **Call an ambulance.**

If you think the heart has stopped: use life saving procedure (called BLS), if you know it.



If they can't be woken (by poking them in the chest and calling their name), or their face or lips turn blue or they have trouble breathing:

Call an ambulance.

Check there is nothing stuck in their throat - (tongue or vomit etc) if there is remove it.

Preventing overdose

- *Use much less after a break from using.
- *Taste the hit before you inject the rest.
- *Don't inject alone.
- *Look after people who have overdosed in the same way you would want them to look after you.

Calling an ambulance

Doctors and paramedics can administer an antidote to a heroin overdose (naloxone) and have life-saving treatments for cocaine/crack-related overdoses, so never hesitate to call an ambulance. In most areas, the police are only called to overdoses if there is a death or an under 16 involved.

Always put a collapsed, unconscious person in the recovery position.

The recovery position



Put the right hand by the head (as if they were waving)



Put the left arm across the chest, so that the back of the hand rests against the cheek



Hold the hand in place and lift up the left knee



Turn them on their side by pushing down on their knee

Getting help



The ‘mother of all jangles’

A regular speedballer who suddenly stops taking drugs will experience a double withdrawal syndrome – a heroin-related ‘cold turkey’ combined with a ‘crack comedown’. Many speedballers are also on methadone, and many use tranquillisers or other drugs – so stopping use of all drugs at the same time would produce the ‘mother of all jangles’. Of course, it is possible to come off a speedball habit with a minimum of withdrawal symptoms, though this usually takes time, full motivation and a little help.

Help and Confidentiality

Needle exchanges

Are the best places to get help with safer speedballing – they don’t ask for identifying information other than initials and date of birth (to prevent double-counting).

Drug treatment agencies

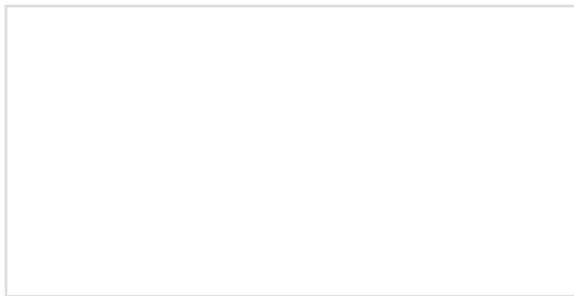
Are the best place to get help with reducing or stopping. Although your name and address is required, the service is medically confidential.

DIP (Drug Intervention Programme)

There is no reason why DIP treatment shouldn’t be as good as any other. DIP is part of the criminal justice system, so has a completely different set of rules around confidentiality

REMEMBER THE BASICS

- * **Don't share any injecting equipment** (receive or pass on 'used works')
Don't share anything: needles, syringes, cookers/spoons, water, citric...ANYTHING
HIV, Hepatitis C and other blood borne viruses are on the increase among injectors.
 - * **Make sure you get enough equipment from your needle exchange**
Work out how many times a day you are injecting and make sure you have enough to last you between visits.
 - * **Try to choose safe locations and clean areas in which to inject speedballs**
If you use shooting galleries make sure you don't mix up your injection equipment with anyone else's equipment.
 - * **Rotate injecting sites - don't keep injecting in the same place.**
Avoid using neck, head or genitals. Reduce vein damage by changing arms or the places where you inject.
 - * **Get medical help for injecting-related physical health problems**
Abscesses, deep vein thrombosis, gangrene, ulcers, cellulitis, blood poisoning etc.
Injecting can cause all sorts of problems. Most problems can be sorted out if you get help quickly - they won't get better on their own.
- If you notice any swelling, discoloured skin, pus, bad smell, or your skin feels hot and/or tender, get it checked out straight away.**
Help is available - ask your doctor or local needle exchange



[] lifeline | publication guidelines

[>] aims
to provide accurate information and
advice on the simultaneous injecting of
heroin and cocaine in a needle exchange
or treatment setting

[>] audience
Speedball injectors

[v] content
Explicit injection information and a couple
of rude words

[£] funding
Thanks to Johnny Vegas and the cast and
crew of Ideal



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