

Detecting misuse of stimulants

NEWSLETTER

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More drug tests for fewer personal injuries

Stimulants have now infiltrated not only party districts, but also, rather frequently, everyday life. In routine situations, this drug use results in inappropriate behaviour: The number of accidents resulting in personal injury under the influence of drugs has increased fivefold from 1991 to 2019.¹

The number of drug accidents resulting in injured individuals has risen from 434 to 2,386, although the actual figure is estimated to be significantly higher if unreported cases are included. Many drug driving journeys are not detected and the majority of those who drive after drug use presume they won't get tested. Over the same period, alcohol accidents with similar results sharply decreased owing to more extensive testing. This is an argument for stepping-up testing for drug use.

For conspicuous drivers, a drug test should always be carried out in addition to a breathalyser test. Even if alcohol is proven, it is prudent to carry out additional investigations: Combined use increases the accident risks even more.

Suspicious driving style

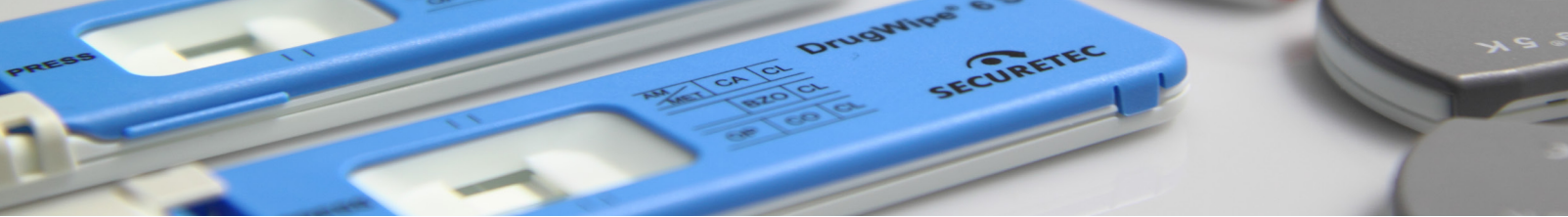
As well as the physical symptoms, the suspect's driving style is significant. A conspicuous driving style can corroborate the suspicion of the driver's drug use. Obvious, learner-type

driving errors provide indications, with additional signs being fixedly looking straight ahead, desperately clenching the steering wheel and exhibiting a posture whereby the face is "stuck" to the windscreen. A markedly casual sitting position, lively and animated communication with other passengers, exuberance and excessive volume, particularly

What are stimulants?

Stimulants are psychoactive substances which have a stimulating effect on the nervous system and increase or accelerate the activity of the nerves. Their use results in increased general energy conversion and significantly delayed fatigue. Body temperature and heart rate increase, as does blood pressure. The result is profound euphoria.

Cocaine, amphetamines, methamphetamines and Ecstasy (MDMA) are all drugs referred to as stimulants. These substances do not fall within the remit of current German legislation on narcotics (i.e. the Narcotics Act). Side-effects are stress symptoms, agitation, aggression, psychological disturbances, dependency and cardiovascular symptoms. High doses switch off the body's own warning system and energy reserves are depleted. This results in severe exhaustion and possibly death. There are permitted uses of stimulants in medicine. However, it is illegal to misuse stimulants to enhance performance, be that recreationally, in sport (as doping) or at work – frequently referred to as uppers. Conversely, downers are substances which have a calming effect.



of music typical of the scene, increase suspicion. Also, odd gesticulation and leaning the head out of the window are two other typical drug indications. The behaviour of the passengers provides additional indications: Drinking in the vehicle, actions suggesting preparation for consumption of narcotics, conspicuous handling under

the line of sight and throwing away objects are all alarm signals. A wide sitting position of the passengers is also conspicuous, as this may be to conceal suspicious items.

A mobile rapid screening test such as the DrugWipe also helps in this case, to expose drug use.

Conspicuous signs of stimulant misuse

You will find below some of the most important symptoms which occur when stimulants are used. However, these points do not cover everything, as there are also other factors at play. For reliable identification of irregularities, instruction and practical training are recommended, for instance as offered by Securetec.

Physical symptoms:

- Dilated pupils up to 6 mm
- Slowed eye reactions
- Overall slowed reactions
- Dry mouth
- Reddened, watery, weeping eyes
- Quickened pulse/respiration
- Stress symptoms
- Nausea, sweating, trembling
- Difficulty swallowing

Behavioural effects:

- Agitation, irritability and aggression
- Smacking and licking lips, twisting jaws

- Orientation problems
- Unsteady gait
- Answers lacking any logic
- Frenetic laughter
- Mumbling
- Logorrhoea (compulsive urge to talk)

Specific to cocaine misuse:

- Traces of white powder on clothing or in the vehicle
- Broken mucous membranes
- Runny nose
- Nosebleeds
- Constantly touching the nose



DrugWipe® rapid drug tests reliably detect stimulants in saliva – just ask us, we’re always happy to help.

References: 1 Statistisches Bundesamt [Federal Statistical Office], Wiesbaden, www.destatis.de — European Drug Report 2021, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, Lisbon — Bundesanstalt für Straßenwesen (German Federal Highway Research Institute), www.bast.de, Bergisch Gladbach — Bund gegen Alkohol und Drogen im Straßenverkehr [Coalition against alcohol and drugs on the roads], www.bads.de, Hamburg — The prevention portal, police union, www.polizei-dein-partner.de, Hilden

Securetec Detektions-Systeme AG

Lilienthalstrasse 7
85579 Neubiberg
Germany
T +49 89 203080-1651
F +49 89 203080-1652
info@securetec.net • www.securetec.net

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The DrugWipe saliva test on YouTube:



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