**Revealed: How speed, meth, ecstasy and other party drugs age the heart at an alarming rate**

* **Scientists analysed blood flow in more than 700 recreation drug users**
* **Found the heart and its arteries much fail earlier in amphetamine consumers**
* **It's believed amphetamines interfere with stem cell functioning - the cells involved in tissue repair and renewal**

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Teenage drug users have elderly hearts, new research reveals.

Amphetamines are already known to age the skin, speed up the heart rate, and increase one's blood pressure.

But new research has found users of MDMA, speed and ice are also left with arteries that are so frail they could belong to a pensioner.

Experts believe it's because the substance interferes with stem cell functioning - the ones involved in tissue repair and renewal.

+2

At risk: Thousands of drug-users are prematurely ageing their heart - and don't know it

University of Western Australia scientists measured blood flow through the upper arm's brachial artery and the forearm's radial artery of 713 people.

The participants were all between the ages of 30 and 40 and had attended a clinic for substance misuse.

This method of testing allowed the researchers to assess the degree of arterial stiffening - a known risk factor of heart disease.

Each patient was asked about their drug use, and placed into one of four groups: non-smokers, smokers, amphetamine users and methadone users.

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Damage: It's believed amphetamines interfere with stem cell functioning - the cells involved in tissue repair and renewal

**COCAINE INCREASES THE RISK OF STROKE**

Each time an adult uses cocaine, their risk of stroke increases six-fold, experts warned last March.

Scientists found that using cocaine in the 24 hours before the event raised the risk substantially.

Moreover, the risk of stroke increased eight-fold when the drug was smoked in a 'crack form'.

The results showed that the cardiovascular system of amphetamine users seemed to be ageing much faster as they had stiffer vessels.

These findings, published in the journal Heart Asia, held true even after taking account weight and cholesterol levels.

And both men and women were equally at risk from the effects of the stimulant, which sends the production of adrenaline into overdrive.

The researchers noted: 'The implication from the present work is that recurrent habitual amphetamine abuse ages the cardiovascular system, and likely the whole organism generally.

'It is therefore conceivable that stimulant abusers do physiological and cardiovascular harm.'

It's not clear if this damage is reversible either, they add, suggesting their findings add even greater impetus to the need to tackle the 'global stimulant epidemic'.

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