



## “Speedballing” Mixing Stimulants and Opioids

### Micromodule Quick Reference Resource

The opioid and stimulant substances that are combined to create a speedball are powerful and dangerous. If a female speedball user is pregnant, misuse of these powerful substances (and the fluctuations that occur when they are combined) can expose the developing fetus to problems. Fluctuating levels of opioids in the mother may expose the fetus to repeated periods of withdrawal which can also harm placenta function, cause fetal convulsions, and increase the risk of death;<sup>1</sup> and placental abruption is an adverse effect of cocaine use during pregnancy.<sup>2</sup>

Children living in households with speedball-using parents may be harmed by exposure to the powerful and dangerous speedball substances and associated paraphernalia (e.g., sharp razors, needles). Speedball users with HIV, hepatitis, or other transmittable infections, may unwittingly expose children to them.

The quick reference chart below provides examples of other effects of speedball use, including adverse effects of parental use on a child.

Effects of Speedball Use	Potential Adverse Effects of Parent’s Speedball Use on a Child
Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anxious parents tend to display increased levels of uncertainty; criticize their children and themselves more often; and demonstrate more fear and show less warmth and affection toward family members.</li><li>• Parent anxiety disorders increase the risk for similar problems in children.<sup>3</sup></li></ul>
Drowsiness (the person may sleep for up to 48 hours straight after “crashing” from speedball usage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase in co-sleeping can increase parent “roll-over” on infant causing injury or death.<sup>4</sup></li></ul>
Paranoia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The fear and perceived threats a parent may perceive can contribute to their confrontational, aggressive, or violent behavior towards children.<sup>5</sup></li></ul>

Effects of Speedball Use	Potential Adverse Effects of Parent's Speedball Use on a Child
Mental impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child's caregiving environment may become altered by parental distraction/potential safety risks for children.<sup>6</sup></li> <li>Less interactions with children may contribute to disruptions in healthy parent-child attachment, and developmental and cognitive delays in children.<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
General confusion	
Incoherence	
Stupor	
Blurred vision	
Breathing Suppression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent could accidentally drop infant or small child or cause other unintentional injuries.</li> <li>The child can experience physical and emotional risks if he/she is left alone until the parent's death is discovered.</li> <li>The child may experience trauma due to witnessing a fatal event.<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>
Uncontrolled and uncoordinated motor skills	
Risk of death from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>stroke</li> <li>heart attack</li> <li>aneurysm</li> <li>respiratory failure</li> </ul>	
Irregular heartbeat	
High blood pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If these and other parental health conditions become chronic, child may have increased risk for internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors.<sup>9</sup></li> </ul>

## Citations

1. [National Institute on Drug Abuse \(2017\). Treating Opioid Use Disorder During Pregnancy. https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/treating-opioid-use-disorder-during-pregnancy/treating-opioid-use-disorder-during-pregnancy](https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/treating-opioid-use-disorder-during-pregnancy/treating-opioid-use-disorder-during-pregnancy)
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3. [Burstein, M., Ginsburg, G.S. & Tein, JY. \(2010\). Parental Anxiety and Child Symptomatology: An Examination of Additive and Interactive Effects of Parent Psychopathology. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 38: 897. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-010-9415-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-010-9415-0)
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5. [Shirley J. Semple, Steffanie A. Strathdee, Jim Zians, and Thomas L. Patterson. Methamphetamine-Using Parents: The Relationship Between Parental Role Strain and Depressive Symptoms. \*Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs\* 2011 72:6, 954-964. <https://www.jsad.com/doi/abs/10.15288/jsad.2011.72.954>](https://www.jsad.com/doi/abs/10.15288/jsad.2011.72.954)
6. Ibid
7. [Spratt EG, Friedenberg SL, Swenson CC, et al. The Effects of Early Neglect on Cognitive, Language, and Behavioral Functioning in Childhood. \*Psychology \(Irvine\)\*. 2012;3\(2\):175-182. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3652241/>](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3652241/)
8. [Mitchell, K.J., Nolte, K., Turner, H.A., Hamby, S., & Jones, L. M. \(2018\). Exposure to Medication Overdose as an Adversity in Childhood. \*Journal of Pediatric Nursing\*, 38, 127–132. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28958454>](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28958454)
9. [Sieh, D. S., Meijer, A. M., Oort, F. J., Visser-Meily, J. M., & Van der Leij, D. A. \(2010\). Problem behavior in children of chronically ill parents: a meta-analysis. \*Clinical child and family psychology review\*, 13\(4\), 384-97. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20640510>](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20640510)

#### Other Resources:

- [Lander L, Howsare J, & Byrne M. \(2013\). The impact of substance use disorders on families and children: from theory to practice. \*Soc Work Public Health\*, 28\(3-4\),194-205. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3725219>](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3725219)
- Content from “Speedballing” MicroModule (see <https://www.training.fadaa.org/>)



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