

FACTS ABOUT BARBITURATES

- 1. Commonly used barbiturates are listed by the generic name with the manufacturing company's brand name in parenthesis: Pentobarbital (Nembutal), Secobarbital (Seconal), Amobarbital/Secobarbital (Tuinal).**
- 2. Barbiturates are drugs used to reduce anxiety or cause sleep. They are no longer commonly used as they have been largely replaced by the safer benzodiazepines. There are some unique medical uses beyond the scope of this fact sheet.**
- 3. Effects are similar to alcohol but they are longer acting.**
- 4. Addiction is a greater problem than for the benzodiazepines.**
- 5. When addiction and its inevitable withdrawal occur, the shorter acting barbiturates, e.g., pentobarbital (Nembutal) cause intense symptoms similar to alcohol, including convulsions (seizures) while the longer acting ones like phenobarbital act as their own taper and usually do not require further treatment. When withdrawal symptoms are very uncomfortable, medical care is needed.**
- 6. Overdose is a serious problem, especially when combined with alcohol. If it is difficult to wake someone who has taken them, medical care is urgent.**