

Information provided by Meth Lab 360 by the LMPD and the Partnership for a Drug Free America.

What is Meth?

Methamphetamine also known as meth, crank, crystal, and speed is a powerfully addictive central nervous system stimulant.

What Does Meth Look Like?

Meth is available as a crystalline powder or in rock like chunks. Meth varies in color, and may be white, yellow, brown, or pink. Meth can be smoked, injected, or snorted.

Where is Meth Made?

Two thirds of our country's meth supply is produced in super labs in Mexico and Southern California, and trafficked throughout the country. The remaining third is made in small meth labs found in basements, kitchens, garages, bedrooms, barns, vacant buildings, campgrounds, hotels, and trunks of cars.

How is it Made?

Meth can be made from household ingredients, including over the counter cold medications containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, red phosphorous, hydrochloric acid, anhydrous ammonia, drain cleaner, battery acid, lye, lantern fuel and antifreeze. The fumes, vapors, and spillage associated with cooking meth are toxic, combustible, and hazardous to children, adults and the environment.

What are the Short Term Effects of Taking Meth?

Immediately after smoking or injection, the user experiences an intense sensation, called a **rush** or **flash**, that lasts only a few minutes and is described as extremely pleasurable. Snorting or swallowing meth produces euphoria a high, but not a rush. Following the **rush**, there is typically a state of high agitation that in some individuals can lead to violent behavior. Other possible immediate effects include increased wakefulness and insomnia,

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decreased appetite, irritability and aggression, anxiety, nervousness and convulsions.

What are the Long Term Effects of Taking Meth?

Meth is addictive, and users can develop a tolerance quickly, needing larger amounts to get high. In some cases, users forego food and sleep and take more meth every few hours for days, **bingeing** until they run out of the drug or become too dysfunctional to continue using. Chronic use can cause paranoia, hallucinations, repetitive behavior (such as compulsively cleaning and grooming or disassembling and assembling objects), and delusions of parasites or insects crawling under the skin. Users can obsessively scratch their skin to get rid of these imagined insects. Long-term use, high dosages, or both can induce full-blown toxic psychosis. This behavior is usually coupled with extreme paranoia. Meth can also cause strokes, heart attack, and death.

Why Some People Use Meth.

- Alters mood in different ways.
- Ingesting produces effects within 15 to 20 minutes.
- Meth initially produces euphoria, enhanced wakefulness, increased physical activity, decreased appetite.
- Snorting produces effects within 3 to 5 minutes.
- Snorting/ingesting orally produces euphoria high but not intense rush.
- Users experience a sense of well being and high energy, a release of social inhibitions, feelings of cleverness, competence, and power.
- Within 5 to 10 seconds after smoking/intravenous injection, intense **rush** or **flash** that lasts only few minutes, described as extremely pleasurable.

"The crystalline white drug quickly seduces those who snort, smoke, or inject it with a euphoric rush of confidence, hyper alertness, and sexiness that lasts for hours on end. And then it starts destroying lives."

- David J. Jefferson, **America's Most Dangerous Drug**, Newsweek

- Meth becomes focus of life users neglect families, home, work, personal hygiene, and safety.

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- Prolonged use leads to bingeing, consuming the drug continuously for up to 3 to 5 days without sleep (some sleepless binges last up to 15 days) and ends with intolerable crashes.
- User driven into severe depression, followed by worsening paranoia, belligerence, aggression a period known as **tweaking**.
- Users eventually collapse from exhaustion and sleep for long periods of time often forcing neglected children to try to fend for themselves.

This is Your Brain on Meth.

- Dopamine is a feel good chemical produced by the brain. Upon first use, meth kicks dopamine production into high gear this is what produces the initial euphoric rush.
- Meth changes brain chemistry, and after extended use, the brain can no longer respond to dopamine.
- The result is that users can no longer feel good, and increase consumption of the drug in an attempt to recapture the first high.
- This cycle often leads to addiction.

Meth Warning Signs.

If you think someone you know might be using meth, or you are a parent who suspects your teen might be using, here is a list of warning signs to look for.

Physical Symptoms:

- Abnormal sweating
- Burns on lips or fingers
- Dental deterioration
- Dilated pupils
- Shortness of breath
- Sores that do not heal
- Track marks on arms
- Weight loss

Behavioral Symptoms:

- Aggression or violent behavior

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- Carelessness about appearance
- Change in friends
- Convulsions
- Deceit or secretiveness
- Decreased appetite
- Erratic attention span
- Incessant talking
- Increased activity
- Irritability
- Long periods of sleep
- Long periods of sleeplessness
- Repetitious behavior, such as picking at skin, pulling out hair, compulsively cleaning, grooming or disassembling and assembling objects such as cars and other mechanical devices.
- Twitching and shaking
- Withdrawal from family and friends

Mental Symptoms:

- Agitation
- Anxiousness
- Burned spoons
- Delusions of parasites or insects crawling under the skin
- Extreme moodiness
- Hallucinations
- Nervousness
- Paranoia
- Paraphernalia
- Pieces of glass/mirrors
- Plastic tubing
- Razor blades
- Rolled up paper money or short straws
- Severe depression
- Syringes/needles

In all cases of meth use, a user may experience a loss of inhibitions and a false sense of control and confidence. This can lead to dangerous behavior and potential harm to the user and to those around him.

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Meth can cause harm not only to those who use the drug, but their family, friends and neighbors too. Here are a few ways meth can affect communities:

Children at Risk.

Thousands of children are neglected every year after living with parents, family members, or caregivers who are meth users or meth cooks. Children who reside in or near meth labs are at great risk of being harmed by toxic ingredients and noxious fumes. Cooking meth is extremely dangerous, and labs often catch on fire and explode. Children whose parents have been using or making meth are often placed in foster homes, straining social services in states hit hard by meth. These children need special care: they may be malnourished, suffering the effects of physical or sexual abuse, and often have behavioral problems as a result of neglect.

Meth labs, along with sales of the drug, breed crime, including burglary, identity theft, domestic violence, and murder. Teens and adults addicted to the drug may steal valuables from their friends or family to pay for their habit. Meth related crime requires extra attention from law enforcement, and meth users are often violent, posing an added risk to local police.

Environmental Harm.

A meth lab can operate unnoticed in any neighborhood, posing a health hazard to everyone around. For each pound of meth produced, five to six pounds of hazardous waste are generated. The chemicals used to make meth are toxic, and **meth cooks** routinely dump waste into streams, rivers, fields, backyards and sewage systems, which can contaminate water resources. Poisonous vapors produced during cooking permeate insulation and carpets, often making homes and buildings uninhabitable. Cleaning up these sites requires specialized training and costs thousands of dollars per site.

If you have questions about environmental contamination from an illegal lab, contact your state's environmental agency.

Meth use and production also strains a community's health care resources. Meth labs often explode, and those inside the lab may suffer severe chemical burns and respiratory damage. Additionally, children removed from homes

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where a parent is making or using meth require medical attention. Many meth cooks are uninsured, and the cost of their care goes uncompensated. Meth use is also associated with spreading hepatitis and HIV, as the drug lowers inhibition and increases libido, which can lead to unsafe sexual practices. As the drug can be injected, users may share needles.

Other health care costs tied to meth use include the need for dental care to repair the damage meth can do to a user's teeth, and funding for treatment to help meth users recover from addiction.

What Are Signs of a Meth Lab?

A typical meth lab is a collection of chemical bottles, hoses, glass jars, tubing and pressurized cylinders containing anhydrous ammonia or hydrochloric acid both highly poisonous and corrosive.

Labs are frequently abandoned, and the toxic chemicals are left behind. Chemicals may also be burned or dumped in woods or along roads.

The most common chemicals used in the meth making process are over the counter cold and asthma medications containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine.

Here are signs of a meth lab:

- Cookware coated with white residue.
- Curtains always drawn or windows blackened or covered on residences, garages, sheds, or other structures.
- Drain cleaner; paint thinner, toluene, denatured alcohol, ammonia, starter fluid, antifreeze, hydrogen peroxide, and rock salt/iodine.
- Excess matchbooks.
- Excessive amounts of trash, particularly chemical containers, coffee filters with red stains, red stained cloth, and empty duct tape rolls.
- Extensive security measures or attempts to ensure privacy such as **No Trespassing** or **Beware of Dog** signs, fences, and large trees or shrubs
- Frequent visitors, particularly at unusual times.
- Heating sources such as hotplates/torches.
- Hoses leading outside for ventilation.

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- Increased activity, especially at night.
- Iodine or chemical stained bathrooms or kitchen fixtures.
- Lantern or camp stove fuel.
- Large numbers of empty pill bottles or blister packs, especially of cold or asthma medication.
- Mason jars or other glassware.
- Plastic tubing.
- Propane tanks with blue corrosion on fittings or with bent or tampered valves.
- Renters who pay their property owners in cash.
- Secretive or unfriendly occupants.
- Soft drink bottles with hoses attached.
- Stripped lithium batteries.
- Unusual strong chemical odors such as ether, ammonia (smells similar to cat urine) and acetone (smells similar to nail polish remover).

If you suspect a dwelling or property may be an illegal lab, contact your local police, or sheriff's department. If it is an emergency, call **911**. Do not enter a site that you think may have been used for cooking meth. Meth labs present extreme dangers from explosions and exposure to hazardous chemicals.

A problem with drugs or alcohol does not discriminate; it can happen to anyone anywhere even a child in the most loving home. It cuts across race, gender, economic lines, and occurs in every region of this country. It is a health issue for you, your child, and your family. Tobacco, drug, and alcohol abuse is one of the most important and preventable adolescent health problems today.

Why Do Kids Experiment with Drugs and Alcohol?

Many experiences of young adulthood are universal such as seeking greater independence and acceptance by friends, rebellion and risk taking, as well as physical and hormonal changes. However, it is important to remember that teens today are exposed to a unique set of societal and cultural pressures.

The top two reasons why kids use drugs or alcohol are:

Recreation: Teens may experiment with or regularly use drugs or alcohol just to get high. Restless, bored, or risk-taking teens may smoke a joint or have a few drinks simply to fill their time. These actions also provide a way to instantly bond with a group of like-minded kids. Soon drugs define their existence and they spend increasing amounts of time seeking ways to get high.

Self Medication: Teenagers may turn to drugs or alcohol to cope with problems and pressures, or as an antidote to unhappy feelings or uncomfortable situations. If a teen is using drugs or alcohol for self-medication, it could also point to other, broader emotional or psychological problems.

The Right Conversation at the Right Time.

What you say to your child and how you say it will change as your child grows and matures.

The First Year of Middle School / Junior High (Age 10 to 14)

Be especially alert during your child's transition from elementary to middle school. They may seem young, but their new surroundings can put them in some very adult situations. They are going to meet new kids, seek acceptance, and start to make more and bigger choices. Many kids this age are exposed to older kids who use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. This is the most critical time to engage your kid in conversations about drugs and alcohol and set a clear no use rule.

The High School Years (Age 14 to 18)

Many teenagers' interests such as fashion, music, television, and video games are harmless. It is important to allow them to express their individuality and be independent, but it is also necessary to set clear and consistent expectations and rules. Know what your child's doing after school, whom he's hanging out with, and when he is expected to be home. It is not always easy. He may complain about it, but your interest shows him you care. By staying involved with your child's daily schedule, you are taking an important step toward keeping him healthy and drug free.

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Parents and caregivers are crucial in helping to prevent this behavior, but are largely unaware and feel ill equipped to respond. Parents must educate themselves and get through to their kids. Kids who learn a lot about the risks of drugs at home are up to fifty (50) percent less likely to use drugs; nine (9) out of ten (10) parents of teens (92 percent or 22 million) say they have talked to their teen about the dangers of drugs, yet fewer than one third of teens (31 percent or 7.4 million) say they **learn a lot about the risks of drugs** from their parents.

As a parent or caregiver, you have a tremendous influence on your child's life. Your constant and caring involvement can help inspire your child to make healthy, drug free choices.

How to Protect Your Child.

There are many ways you can protect your kids and talking with them is one of the most effective. Communicating with your son or daughter on a daily basis helps him or her feel connected to you and research indicates that is what matters most when a child chooses to turn down drugs.

Start Talking and Talk Often.

It is never too early to start talking with your child about drugs and alcohol, and there are many ways to get the conversation going. You can use everyday events as a starting point. Recent drug or alcohol related incidents in your community or family, articles in the newspaper, stories on the nightly news, and plot lines in movies and television shows can all provide moments to continue a dialogue with your child about drug and alcohol abuse. You can also take advantage of blocks of time, such as before school, on the way to soccer practice, or after dinner to discuss drugs and to voice your **no use** expectation.

Role Play.

A great way to help kids prepare for situations where they might be offered drugs or alcohol is to act out scenarios. Kids are more likely to be offered drugs from a friend than a stranger is. It may be difficult for your child to say no to friends the people they look to for validation, recognition, and fun. Teach him that it is okay to say no to his friends, and act out scenarios together so he has the tools to do this.

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For example, you could ask your child what they would do in the following situation: Your child goes to a party where someone has brought a bottle of vodka or beer. Some older high school kids are there. Several kids are drinking or smoking joints and they ask your child if she would like some too. Take the role of the older teen who casually offers a can of beer or a joint to your child. Reassure your child that friends will respect his decision not to get involved. Remind him that most people are focused on themselves, which makes it less likely, that they will be concerned with what others do.

Provide Your Child with Possible Responses for to Say When Offered Drugs.

"No, thanks."

"Nah, I'm not into that."

"Nah, I'm okay. Thanks."

"No, thanks. I'm on the _____ team and I don't want to risk it."

"Nah, I'm training for _____."

"No. I gotta go soon."

Be a Parent, Not a Pal.

Provide your child with responses they can use if they are offered drugs.

Actively listen to your child. Avoid interrupting. Give your undivided attention.

Reinforce your love say the words **I love you** often.

Educate your child about the risks and consequences of drug and alcohol use.

Never underestimate your child's vulnerability to drugs even at a young age.

Teach the principles of **why**, not just **what** to do or not to do.

Answering the Question: "Did you ever do drugs?"

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For many parents, the answer is simply **no**. However, this may be a tough question to answer for other parents. The conversation does not have to be awkward. You can use it to your advantage by turning it into a teachable moment. Experts believe it is best to tell the truth. However, it is not necessary to share details. Use the discussion as an opportunity to speak openly about what attracted you to drugs, alcohol, or tobacco, why they are dangerous, and why you want your child to avoid making the same mistake. Remember, the issue is not about your past. It is about your child's future. What is important now is that your kid understands that you do not want him to use these substances.

How to Spot Alcohol or Drug Use.

Mood swings and unpredictable behavior are sometimes evidence of teenage **growing pains**, but can also point to use of drugs or alcohol. Be aware of any unexplained changes and know the potential warning signs:

- Changed eating and sleeping patterns up at night and sleeping during the day.
- Deteriorating relationships with family members.
- Hanging around with a new group of friends.
- Has a hard time concentrating.
- Hostile, uncooperative and frequently breaks curfew.
- Household money has been disappearing.
- Losing interest in hobbies, sports and other favorite activities.
- Red rimmed eyes and runny nose, but your child does not have allergies or a cold.
- Slipping grades and missing school.
- Withdrawn, depressed, tired, or careless about personal grooming.
- You have found any of the following in your home: pipes, rolling papers, small medicine bottles, eye drops, butane lighters, homemade pipes or bongs (pipes that use water as a filter) made from soda cans or plastic beverage containers.

Some of these warning signs could also point to broader health problems, such as an emotional issue, physical, or mental illness. Research suggests that as many as half of all kids involved with drugs or alcohol may be affected by mental health problems. Before you choose a course of action, discuss your observations with your child's doctor.

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The Partnership has developed a wide range of resources for parents and caregivers, which are available at www.drugfree.org/Parent.

Far beyond the harm it inflicts on users, meth affects whole communities, family members, children, law enforcement officers and first responders, homeowners, social services, healthcare professionals, utility and sanitation workers, real estate professionals, and business owners. As a concerned citizen, you can help fight this devastating drug.

Here Are Ways You Can Help Your Community Take Action.

Educate Yourself.

The Partnership's meth website www.drugfree.org/meth can help you learn the facts about meth. The site is updated frequently with new stories, information, and resources.

Spread the Word.

- Email relevant news articles to your friends to make them more aware of the dangers of this drug.
- Once you have learned the facts about the dangers of meth, talk about them with your friends, neighbors, coworkers, and most importantly your children.
- Put up educational posters in stores in your area and where you work.
- Write letters to your local newspaper and television stations to encourage them to cover meth related news stories or share your personal experience with them.

Be Alert

- If you are moving into a new home, ask your real estate broker about meth activity in the area.
- Look for signs of meth use, production, and dealing throughout your neighborhood.
- Report suspicious activity to the police.

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- Share these fact sheets with local area schools to assist teachers and administrators in spotting the signs of meth use and the signals that a child may be living in a home where meth is used.

Take Action

- Advocate for an in school meth education program at PTA meetings and teacher conferences.
- Encourage family and friends struggling with meth use to get help. Learn how at www.drugfree.org/intervention.
- Enlist the help of groups in your community: newspapers and TV stations, faith based organizations, neighborhood watch programs, local businesses, colleges and universities, real estate and public housing agencies, secondary schools and parents' organizations.
- Go to www.drugfree.org and subscribe to our **eNewsletter**.
- Join a meth education, support, or activist group.
- Speak out in schools, places of worship or any public community forum and educate others about the dangers of meth.
- Talk to your kid about the dangers of meth.
- Volunteer at a local treatment center, hospital, or burn center, or offer your time to social workers helping at risk youth and children whose parents suffer from addiction.
- Work with the local police to set up a Block Watch program in your neighborhood.

Additional Resources.

National Methamphetamine Resources

The Partnership for a Drug Free America

Comprehensive information, resources, video stories, and tips from experts and parents.

American Council for Drug Education www.acde.org

Community Anti Drug Coalition of America www.cadca.org

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The Drug Enforcement Administration Methamphetamine Information
www.dea.gov/concern/amphetamines.html

Just Think Twice A youth oriented site created by the Drug Enforcement Agency's Demand Reduction Program.

KCI: The Anti Meth Site Extensive resources and links about methamphetamine.

www.methresources.gov

The federal government's comprehensive directory of information and programs related to methamphetamine.

The National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children Alliance for those concerned about children endangered by caregivers who manufacture, deal, or use drugs.

National Association of Counties Methamphetamine Action Clearinghouse.

(Search on **meth action clearinghouse**) NACO is committed to raising public awareness about and helping counties respond to the nation's methamphetamine drug problem

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

www.nimh.nih.gov

Office of National Drug Control Policy Methamphetamine Fact Sheet.

www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov

Search on **methamphetamine fact sheet**.

Detailed description of methamphetamine and other resources.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

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SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) **1-800-729-6686**.

SAMHSA's Center on Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) **1-800-662-HELP**.

State and Local Resources.

Partnership Local Programs.

Choose **Affiliates** from the home page.

Local information about methamphetamine is available from the Partnership's local chapters, affiliates, and alliances.

SAMHSA Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator.

An online clearinghouse of methamphetamine information, which includes a directory of programs, fact sheets, and events, organized on a state-by-state basis.

Challenges of Meth Treatment.

Because of the drug's destructive nature, treating meth addiction presents unique challenges. Upon entering treatment, a meth user may:

- Be more agitated during the first month and have a very short attention span.
- Have physical problems, such as wounds, seizures, and advanced tooth decay.
- Have psychiatric problems such as delusions or extreme agitation.
- Require longer treatment than they might from an addiction to another substance.
- Require several nights of good sleep, since meth users have often been awake for days.

What Works?

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There are many forms of treatment, but effective treatment will raise awareness; addresses physical, psychological, emotional, and social problems; and will involve family and friends. Treatment is usually more successful when the individual has the support of loved ones.

Treatment for Meth is Getting Better and Better.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has invested tens of millions of dollars into researching the effects of meth and effective treatments. According to NIDA and other experts, one treatment method, the Matrix Model, has shown significant success in treating meth addiction.

Meet Real People in Recovery from Meth.

Visit www.drugfree.org/meth, where you will find inspiring personal stories of meth recovery.

Keep in Mind.

- **Treatment options vary.** Sometimes a variety of approaches is needed to help someone achieve recovery. Different types of treatment work for different people.
- **Treatment takes persistence but it pays off in the end.** Recovery is not instantaneous. It is an ongoing, difficult process that requires work to maintain, but it can lead to a profound life transformation and enormous personal growth.
- **Treatment is possible for everyone even you.** If you are concerned about your own drug or alcohol use, you do not have to deal with it alone. Consider talking to a doctor, therapist, teacher, or family member who can lend support. Attend a meeting of an anonymous self-help group devoted to helping members recover and lead healthy lives.
- **Treatment does work.** People with drug or alcohol problems can get well; they can regain their physical health and well-being and improve their relationships with others.

Intervention a Treatment.

There Are Ways to Recover from a Drug or Alcohol Problem

Finding Help

Act now. First steps are often the most difficult, but when it comes to addiction, you cannot wait. Addiction is a disease a serious health problem like heart disease, cancer, or diabetes that can happen to anyone. If left untreated, it can progress and may even be fatal. Do not wait until something really bad happens. Get help now.

The Partnership has created tools on our website **www.drugfree.org/intervention** for those seeking help. At this site, you can:

- Find links to the best resources on the web.
- Get help for your problem and support to stay off drugs and alcohol.
- Get the facts. Educating yourself about drug or alcohol addiction is the first step.
- Learn about addiction, types of treatment and where to go for help. Take online quizzes to find out if you or someone you know needs professional help. Discover what family members can do to support a loved one's recovery.
- Read real people's stories of how they got well.

To find a treatment program, visit www.drugfree.org/intervention or call **1-8M00-662-HELP**.