



Speed Kills – The Growing Problem with Methamphetamines

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Meth. We hear about it in the news, on the street, in the mall, and in elevators. Methamphetamines seem to be everywhere. Many areas previously thought to be “untouched” by other drugs have turned into neighborhoods filled with houses serving as makeshift meth labs. Rebellious teens who once got their thrills by stealing beer from their parent’s garage are now finding themselves viciously addicted to a deadly drug. The victims of meth are not limited to the “stereotypical addict” on the street. Meth addicts are the business people trying to stay ahead of their game. They are the working parents trying to find the energy to balance work and family. They are the students looking for a good time. They are even those trying to lose a few extra pounds.

What is Meth?

Meth (methamphetamine) belongs to a group of drugs known as *stimulants*. Although it is referred to by many names, the most common “street names” are: *crank*, *speed*, and *chalk*. When in its crystallized form, which can be inhaled by smoking, it is commonly referred to as *ice*, *crystal*, and *glass*. For a more comprehensive list of slang terms for meth, check out The KCI Anti-Meth Site at: http://www.kci.org/meth_info/slang_names.htm.

For some people, meth can seem like an easy answer to help them lead a more productive life, as it makes people able to stay awake for long periods of time. It also causes a decrease in appetite, which makes many people use meth because they think it will make them lose weight and look better. However, while many view the supposed “benefits” of meth to be worth the risks involved, many people would probably never start using meth in the first place if they were fully aware of the amount of damage it can cause. People addicted to meth often lose their jobs, their relationships, their children, their health, and even their lives.

What is it made from?

Methamphetamines are cheap and fairly easy to make and get. The recipe for meth includes toxic chemicals such as brake fluid, drain cleaner, battery acid, antifreeze, and ammonia. Such deadly ingredients can take quite a toll on your health. The main ingredient of meth, however, is ephedrine, an ingredient found in cold medications. When taken in excess, ephedrine can cause stroke or a heart attack.²

How does it look?

The way that meth looks can vary based on what form it is in. For example, it can be smoked, injected, snorted, or swallowed. How it looks can also differ based on how it is made and what ingredients it is made with. When in powder form, the color typically ranges from white to yellow. It can be in crystals that look like ice. It can also come in capsules or tablets of various colors.

The Powerful Effects of Meth

Methamphetamine is an extremely powerful and dangerous drug. It is so addictive that some people claim to have become addicted after trying it just one time. Meth produces a “high” that can last for days. However, after the initial high wears off, it is usually replaced by irritability that often leads to violent behavior. Meth pushes the mind and body further than it is meant to go, which can lead to extremely damaging consequences.

(Information obtained from the National Institute on Drug Abuse)¹

Short-term consequences of meth use:

- Extreme irritability
- Increased wakefulness and activity followed by excessive sleep
- Anxiety and paranoia
- Aggressiveness, mood swings, and unpredictability
- Decreased appetite
- Tremors and convulsions
- Hallucinations and delusions

Long-term consequences

When used in excess, meth can lead to serious, and sometimes permanent health problems.

- Brain damage
- Coma
- Stroke
- Internal organ damage
- Extreme skin decay
- Dental decay, or “meth mouth”
- Death

Choosing Life Over Meth

If you or someone you care about is using meth, it’s not too late to get help. As with all types of addiction, the first step in beating it is to admit that you have a problem. Talk with a friend, family member, doctor, or anyone that can provide you with support and help you to stay away from meth. It is never too late to make the decision to keep away from meth. It’s a decision that could save your life.

References:

¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2005). *NIDA InfoFacts Methamphetamine*. Retrieved December 6, 2005 from <http://www.nida.nih.gov/infofacts/methamphetamine.html>.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Tips for Teens: The Truth About Methamphetamine. <http://www.health.org/govpubs/phd861/>

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