

# Methamphetamine



## What is Methamphetamine?

**Methamphetamine** is a highly addictive stimulant. Although it is chemically related to amphetamine, the central nervous system effects of methamphetamine are stronger than amphetamine. Both drugs have some limited therapeutic uses, primarily in the treatment of obesity.

Methamphetamine is commonly referred to as *speed*, *meth*, *crank*, *glass*, *blue meth*, *chicken feed*, *cinnamon*, *crink*, *crystal meth*, *desocsins*, *geep*, *granulated orange*, *hot ice*, *ice*, *kaksonjae*, *lemon drop*, *ozs*, *peanut butter*, *sketch*, *spoosh*, *stove top*, *super ice*, *tick tick*, *trash*, *wash*, *working man's cocaine*, *yellow barn*, and *chalk*.

## What Does Methamphetamine Look Like?

Methamphetamine is most commonly found in a powder form that easily dissolves in water. Also called "crystal meth," it is bitter tasting, with colors ranging from dingy white to reddish brown. Powder is usually injected or snorted, but can be orally ingested or smoked.

Methamphetamine can also be found in the form of clear chunky crystals, called "ice," or "glass." It is similar in appearance to rock candy, crushed ice, or broken glass. Ice is a very pure, smokable form of methamphetamine and is more addictive than powder or tablets.

A pill form of methamphetamine, commonly called "Yaba," comes in small brightly colored tablets. Thai for "crazy medicine," Yaba tablets are sometimes flavored such as grape, orange, and vanilla. Tasting like candy, the tablets are

obviously marketed to a young audience, particularly at raves or parties where ecstasy (a similar looking drug) has been well established. The tablets are commonly reddish-orange or green, and fit inside the end of a drinking straw. They have a variety of logos, with "WY" being the most common.

## What Are The Immediate Effects?

Methamphetamine can be taken orally, injected, snorted, or smoked. 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. Oral or intranasal use produces euphoria—a high but not a rush. Both are believed to result from the release of high levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine into areas of the brain that regulate feelings of pleasure. Larger and more frequent doses are taken in order to achieve the desired effect.



CRYSTAL METH



YABA



METH ROCKS



ICE

## How Sexy is This?

All substance abuse is frequently marketed as enhancing sex life or making you more attractive or a better social companion. But buying meth is buying under false pretenses. Hair falls out. Teeth fall out. That's not sexy.



**Meth Mouth:** The growing use of highly addictive methamphetamine throughout the country is creating a prominent scar on an increasing number of users—rotting, brittle teeth that seem to crumble from their mouths. Methamphetamine can be made with a horrid mix of substances, including over-the-counter cold medicine, fertilizer, battery acid and hydrogen peroxide. Together, the chemicals reduce a user's saliva, which causes bacteria to build up a lot faster. Meth users also may neglect their teeth, or moisten their dry mouths with high-sugar drinks, and anxiety caused by the drug prompts them to grind their teeth, which speeds decay.

**Skin Scabbies:** Meth damages your brain and central nervous system. Users claim they feel bugs crawling under the skin. They scratch these areas to get relief causing open sores that become infected and ugly.

## Health Hazards

Methamphetamine releases high levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine, stimulating brain cells and enhancing mood and body movement. It also has a toxic effect, damaging brain cells containing dopamine and serotonin, another neurotransmitter. Over time, methamphetamine causes reduced levels of dopamine, which can result in symptoms like those of Parkinson's disease, a severe movement disorder.

Chronic long-term use develops a tolerance for methamphetamine leading to dependency. To intensify the desired effects, users may take

higher doses of the drug, take it more frequently, or change their method of drug intake. In some cases, abusers do not eat or sleep while indulging in a form of binging known as a "run," injecting as much as a gram of the drug every 2 to 3 hours over several days until they run out of the drug or are too disorganized to continue.

In addition to being addicted, chronic abusers exhibit symptoms that include violent behavior, anxiety, confusion, and insomnia. Psychotic symptoms such as intense paranoia, auditory hallucinations, mood disturbances, and delusions (for example, the sensation of insects creeping on the skin) are common. This paranoia and out-of-control rage,

coupled with extremely violent behavior, can result in homicidal, as well as suicidal thoughts.

Methamphetamine can cause a variety of cardiovascular problems including rapid heart rate, irregular heartbeat, increased blood pressure, and irreversible damage to small blood vessels in the brain, producing strokes. Hyperthermia (elevated body temperature) and convulsions occur with methamphetamine overdoses, and if not treated, can result in death. Other effects include respiratory problems, and extreme anorexia. Its use can result in heart attack leading to sudden death. Acute lead poisoning is another risk for methamphetamine abusers.

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## Who Uses Meth?

According to the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 12.3 million Americans age 12 and older had tried methamphetamine at least once in their lifetimes (5.2 percent of the population), with the majority of past-year users between 18 and 34 years of age.

2004 Monitoring The Future Study indicates that 6.2% of 12th graders have tried methamphetamine.

Methamphetamine use has been most pronounced among males between the ages of 19 and 40. Its use is increasing among college students and young professionals involved in the club scene or participating at rave parties. Here are some others that may be using meth:

- High school and college students wanting to cram more hours into the day.
- Women who love the way meth takes away their appetite.
- Moms looking for a way to "do it all."
- Long-haul truck drivers to stay awake.
- Professionals under pressure to do more work.
- People looking to kick up the sexual thrill to a new high.
- The bored, lonely, angry, depressed—almost ANYBODY!

## Methamphetamine Trafficking

Clandestine (secret or hidden) labs account for nearly all of the methamphetamine trafficked and abused in the United States. Almost exclusively centered in California and Mexico, "Super labs" are capable of producing 10 pounds or more of methamphetamine in a 24 hour period.

Methamphetamine is made in various ways, but it is primarily produced using ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. Organized crime groups have established access to wholesale ephedrine and are producing large quantities of high-purity methamphetamine on a regular basis. This access along with well-established cocaine,



heroin, and marijuana distribution networks enable them to supply methamphetamine to a larger retail-level market. Over the past few years, seizures of bulk ephedrine shipments show the magnitude of the problem.

In addition to large-scale production, thousands of small independent clandestine labs are springing up in almost every state in the union. Law enforcement efforts are a frustrating game of finding the hidden lab, shutting it down,

## Methamphetamine users can be identified by:

- Signs of agitation, excited speech, decreased appetite, and increased physical activity levels.
- Dilated pupils, high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, chest pain, shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, and elevated body temperature.
- Episodes of sudden and violent behavior, intense paranoia, visual and auditory hallucinations, and bouts of insomnia.
- A tendency to compulsively clean and groom or repetitively sort and disassemble objects, such as cars and other mechanical devices.



cleaning up the toxic mess, only to find production has resumed in another location.

Danger to law enforcement and local citizens is great. Traffickers often are well armed, and their laboratories are booby-trapped. Weapons, ranging from pistols to high-powered weapons and explosives, are commonly found at laboratory sites.

## Meth Lab Dangers

Meth labs pose great risks to the manufacturers, their families, neighbors, law enforcement officials and cleanup crews. The products and chemicals used in the manufacturing process can create: highly explosive, flammable atmosphere, acutely reactive metals, acutely corrosive atmosphere, oxygen deficient atmosphere and toxic air emissions.

The manufacturing process contaminates carpet, appliances, furniture, clothing, drywall, insulation, and the building itself.

### Exposure To Methamphetamine Lab Chemicals May Cause:

- Shortness of breath, coughing
- Chest pain, dizziness
- Lack of coordination
- Tissue irritation
- Burns of the skin, eyes, nose, and mouth
- Headache, nausea, fatigue
- Death



PORTABLE METH LAB

## How To Recognize A Meth Lab

Meth manufacturers have common habits. A combination of the following may be cause for concern.

- Occupants have frequent visitors and activity occurs at night.
- Occupants appear unemployed, but have plenty of money.
- Occupants are secretive, suspicious, display odd behavior.
- Occupants smoke outside.
- Home has extensive security, "private property" signs, camouflage or concealment.
- Windows blackened, curtains always drawn.
- Large amounts of cold tablet containers that list Ephedrine or Pseudoephedrine as ingredients.
- Large amounts of lithium batteries and soft gray metallic ribbon stored in oil or kerosene.
- Jars or bottles labeled iodine, red phosphorus, sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid.
- Jars contain clear liquid with a white colored solid on the bottom.
- Jars contain metallic purple crystals, or fine dark red or purple powder.
- Jars or bottles with rubber tubing attached.
- Propane tanks with fittings that have turned blue.
- Coffee filters or other filter material containing a white pasty substance, a dark red sludge, or small amounts of shiny white crystals.
- Garbage contains high number of chemical products: camping

For every pound of drug produced, 5 to 6 pounds of toxic waste are left over. Meth site cleanup can cost up to:

**\$150,000.**



fuel, paint thinner, lye, drain cleaners, acetone, muriatic or sulfuric acid.

- Structure, pavement, or soils are discolored (bleached, rusted, burned or corroded).

**Strong or unusual chemical odors are present:**

- Ether-like "hospital" odors
- Solvent-like odors resembling paint thinners or cleaning fluids
- Vinegary odors like pickled food, mayonnaise or salad dressings
- Ammonia odors like wet diapers, cattle feed lots, glass cleaners

NEVER enter a place you think may be a meth lab and NEVER confront your neighbor with your suspicions. If you suspect a location may be a meth lab, report your suspicions to your local police or sheriff's office immediately.

In 2002, 46 percent of the 15,676 methamphetamine lab incidents were reported in 9 states located in middle America: Missouri (2,788), Iowa (862), Kansas (763), Oklahoma (595), Tennessee (560), Illinois (551), Arkansas (398), Kentucky (372), and Nebraska (272).