

Meth360[®] Information Kit

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, 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

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

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

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

Negative Effects

- Meth becomes focus of life – users neglect families, home, work, personal hygiene and safety.
- 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're a parent who suspects your teen might be using, here is a list of warning signs to look for.

Physical Symptoms:

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

Behavioral Symptoms:

- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Change in friends
- Increased activity
- Long periods of sleeplessness
- Long periods of sleep
- Incessant talking
- Irritability
- Twitching and shaking
- Decreased appetite
- Erratic attention span
- 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
- Aggression or violent behavior
- Convulsions
- Carelessness about appearance
- Deceit or secretiveness

Mental Symptoms:

- Paranoia
- Anxiousness
- Nervousness
- Agitation
- Extreme moodiness
- Severe depression
- Hallucinations
- Delusions of parasites or insects crawling under the skin

Paraphernalia:

- Rolled up paper money or short straws
- Pieces of glass/mirrors
- Razor blades
- Burned spoons
- Plastic tubing
- 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.

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.

Crime

Meth labs, along with sales of the drug, breed crime, including burglary, identity theft, domestic violence and even 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.

It Can Happen to Anyone Anywhere

A problem with drugs or alcohol doesn't discriminate; it can happen to anyone anywhere — even a child in the most loving home. It cuts across race, gender and economic lines, and occurs in every region of this country. It's 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. But it's 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.

Parents are Crucial

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 **50 percent less likely to use drugs; Nine out of 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.

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 10-14)

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're 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 14-18)

Many teenagers' interests — such as fashion, music, television and video games — are harmless. It's important to allow them to express their individuality and be independent, but it's also necessary to set clear and consistent expectations and rules. Know what your child's doing after school, who he's hanging out with, and when he's expected to be home. It's 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're taking an important step toward keeping him healthy and drug-free.

Start Talking — and Talk Often

It's 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. 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's okay to say no to his friends, and act out scenarios together so he has the tools to do this.

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'd 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

P = Provide your child with responses they can use if they're offered drugs

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

R = Reinforce your love – say the words "I love you" often

E = Educate your child about the risks and consequences of drug & alcohol use

N = Never underestimate your child's vulnerability to drugs – even at a young age

T = Teach the principles of "why," not just "what" to do or not to do

Answering the Question: "Did You Ever Do Drugs?"

For many parents, the answer is simply "no." However, this may be a tough question to answer for other parents. The conversation doesn't have to be awkward. You can use it to your advantage by turning it into a teachable moment. Experts believe it's best to tell the truth. However, it's 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 isn't about your past. It's about your child's future. What's important now is that your kid understands that you don't 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:

- Withdrawn, depressed, tired or careless about personal grooming
- Hostile, uncooperative and frequently breaks curfew
- Deteriorating relationships with family members
- Hanging around with a new group of friends
- Slipping grades and missing school
- Losing interest in hobbies, sports and other favorite activities
- Changed eating and sleeping patterns — up at night and sleeping during the day
- Has a hard time concentrating
- Red-rimmed eyes and runny nose, but your child doesn't have allergies or a cold
- Household money has been disappearing.
- 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.

Note: 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.

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

People Do Get Well From Meth Addiction

Recovering from meth addiction can be difficult, but it is not impossible. Research shows that meth addiction is treatable — people do get well.

Challenges of Meth Treatment

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

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

What Works?

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) have 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.

And Keep in Mind

- **Treatment options vary.** Sometimes a variety of approaches are 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're concerned about your own drug or alcohol use, you don't have to deal with it alone. Consider talking to a doctor, therapist, teacher or family member who can lend support. Or 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.

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. *Don't wait until something really bad happens. Get help now.*

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

- 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.
- Get help for your problem and support to stay off drugs and alcohol.
- Read real people's stories of how they got well.
- Find links to the best resources on the web.

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