

Meth: What You Should Know

What is meth?

Methamphetamine (METH-am-FET-uh-meen), or meth, is an addictive drug. In small amounts, it can be given by doctors to treat certain illnesses. But it is often sold illegally in very dangerous forms. Some common names for meth are crystal meth, ice, crank, speed, chalk, and glass. Meth can be smoked, snorted, injected, or swallowed. Meth use is linked to risky sexual behavior, criminal activity, and death.

Illegal meth is often made in home labs by mixing over-the-counter medicines. Fumes from a home meth lab can irritate skin. The chemicals can also cause poisoning. Sometimes home meth labs explode and burn or kill people.

What does meth do?

When people use meth, they feel excited and have a lot of energy. This feeling lasts about six to 24 hours. But using meth can cause heart attack, stroke, high body temperature, or seizures. Women who use meth while they are pregnant can harm the baby or go into labor early.

What happens if someone keeps using meth?

People who are addicted to meth will need more and more to feel the effects, and may become addicted. They may feel depressed or unhappy when they stop using meth for even a short time. Even if they don't use it often, it can cause cravings and withdrawal problems like depression, tiredness, and feeling anxious.

What problems does meth cause?

Over time, using meth causes violent behavior, feeling anxious or threatened, mood changes, confusion, sleeplessness, and hearing or seeing things that aren't real.

Using meth over time also changes how people look. They age quickly and their teeth decay. Many people who use meth don't get proper nutrition and lose weight. If they inject meth, they may get skin rashes. Some people pick at their skin and get infections.

Children in homes where meth is used or made are at risk of injury and physical symptoms.

How is meth use disorder treated?

Meth use is treated with individual or group therapy. Joining a support group or drug treatment program also may help.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

Montana Meth Project

<http://www.montanameth.org>

National Institute on Drug Abuse

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugpages/methamphetamine.html>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

July 2018



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <https://familydoctor.org>.

This information provides a general overview and may not apply to everyone. Talk to your family doctor to find out if this information applies to you and to get more information on this subject. Copyright © 2018 American Academy of Family Physicians. Individuals may photocopy this material for their own personal reference, and physicians may photocopy for use with their own patients. Written permission is required for all other uses, including electronic uses.