

Methamphetamine Abuse

Methamphetamine (meth) is a commonly abused, potent stimulant drug that is part of a larger family of is an amphetamine derivative with similar stimulant properties. It is sometime referred to a poor man's cocaine.

Street Terms for Methamphetamine

“Chalk” “Crank” “Crystal”

“Crystal meth” “Fire”

“Glass” “Ice” “Speed”

“Tina” “Yaba”

Methamphetamine (Meth) use is increasing rapidly in the U.S. Meth production is inexpensive, easy to make and the effect lasts longer than crack cocaine (12 hours versus one hour for cocaine). Meth is a powerful central nervous system stimulant, which leads to permanent brain damage. Oral health effects of meth use are coupled strongly to severe oral health effects. Additionally heavy soft drink use, due to severe xerostomia caused by meth, adds to the devastating effects in the oral cavity.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT METHAMPHETAMINE ABUSE

Q: How is meth used?

A: Methamphetamine is smoked, snorted, injected, or taken orally. Typically, it is a pungent tasting powder that easily dissolves in beverages. Another common form of the drug is a clear, chunky crystal. This is the form known as “ice” or “crystal meth” and it is smoked in a manner

similar to crack cocaine. Meth is also found as small, brightly colored tablets often called by their Thai name, Yaba.

Q: How does meth affect your health?

A: Methamphetamine stimulates release and blocks re-uptake of neurotransmitters monoamines (dopamine, norepinephrine and serotonin) in the brain. Several areas of the brain are affected: the nucleus accumbens, prefrontal cortex, and striatum. When meth alters levels of neurotransmitters in the brain, it causes feelings of bliss and euphoria. Meth is a neurotoxin and powerful stimulant, which causes cerebral edema and hemorrhage, paranoia, and hallucinations. Short-range effects include insomnia, hyperactivity, and decreased desire for food, increased respiration, and tremors. Long-standing effects include mental addiction, stroke, aggressive behavior, anxiety, confusion, paranoia, auditory hallucination, mood disturbances, and delusions. Meth use ultimately causes depletion of monoamines in the brain, which can have an effect on learning.

Systemic effects with high doses include increases in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure due to cardiac stimulation and arrhythmias. Other systemic effects include: shortness of breath, hyperthermia, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Q: How does meth affect the mouth and teeth?

A: The oral effects of methamphetamine use can be overwhelming. Unusual rampant caries is a hall mark sign of “meth mouth”. A unique severe pattern of decay is seen on the facial smooth surface of the teeth and interproximal surfaces of the anterior teeth (see Panels A & B).





[Methamphetamine Abuse: Dental and Oral Health Consequences](#)