

Facts about Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine is commonly known as "speed," "meth," and "chalk." In its smoked form it is often referred to as "ice," "crystal," "crank," and "glass." Methamphetamine is a Schedule II stimulant, which means it has a high potential for abuse and is available only through a prescription that cannot be refilled. There are a few accepted medical reasons for its use, such as the treatment of narcolepsy, attention deficit disorder, and for short-term use-obesity; but these medical uses are limited.

It is a man-made stimulant and the bulk of methamphetamine currently on the streets has been illegally manufactured. The chemicals used in the manufacturing process can be corrosive, explosive, flammable, toxic, and, possibly, radioactive. For every pound of finished product, 5 or 6 pounds of chemical waste is left at the illicit lab site.

There are currently three types of methamphetamine:

1. L-methamphetamine (*Levo-methamphetamine*) raises the blood pressure and causes the heart to beat rapidly, but does not increase alertness very much. Shakes/tremors and stomach cramps are common physical side-effects.
2. D/L-methamphetamine (*Dextro-levo methamphetamine*) is made with the amalgam (P2P) method. It was popular during the 1960s, but it is still made and distributed. It has to be injected to get the desired rush and produces side effects such as shakes, tremors, and stomach cramps.
3. D-methamphetamine (*Dextro-methamphetamine*) is currently the most common. It is made by the ephedrine reduction process. It is 2 to 10 times as physiologically active as L-methamphetamine. It increases the heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, and rate of breathing and dilates the pupils, and has fewer adverse side effects than the other two types of methamphetamine.

The term "ice" most often refers to a pure form of d-methamphetamine HCl. "Ice," also known as crystal meth, is a smokeable form of methamphetamine. It is a large, usually clear crystal of high purity that is smoked in a glass pipe. The smoke is odorless, leaves a residue that can be resmoked, and produces effects that may continue for 12 hours or more.

Methamphetamine comes in pill, powder, clear liquid, and rock form (that resembles a block of paraffin). The coloration of methamphetamine may vary significantly due to the manufacturing process and as a result, it may have a foul rancid odor. Possible colors include: colorless/white, red, orange, purple, green, and brown.

Methamphetamine is most often used in a "binge and crash" pattern. Tolerance for methamphetamine occurs within minutes. The pleasurable effects begin to disappear even before the drug concentration in the blood falls significantly. Users try to maintain the high by binging on the drug.

Identifying Abuse

- Users are referred to as a Meth head (regular user), Meth monster (one who has a violent reaction to methamphetamine), or Speed freak (habitual user of methamphetamine).
- The person may exhibit anxiousness; nervousness; incessant talking; extreme moodiness and irritability; purposelessness; repetitious behavior such as picking at skin or pulling out hair; sleep disturbances; false sense of confidence and power; aggressive or violent behavior; disinterest in previously enjoyed activities; and severe depression.
- A person using alcohol while on methamphetamine, during the "tweaking" stage, can be identified by looking at their eyes. Their eyes will jerk back and forth when they look out of the corner of their eyes (a horizontal-gaze nystagmus).
- The chronic user of powdered methamphetamine is often undernourished with a gaunt appearance, poor hygiene, and bad teeth. Chronic abusers are violent and suffer rapid mood swings, with behavior going from friendly to hostile in seconds.
- If an abuser has taken a lethal dose of d-methamphetamine, the heart rate will rapidly increase and the abuser will collapse and suffer a heart attack or a stroke. The only overt signs of overdose are an abnormally high temperature or the symptoms of a heart attack or stroke.

Methamphetamine's high lasts anywhere from 8 to 24 hours, and 50 percent of the drug is removed from the body in 12 hours; Methamphetamine will stay in the plasma between 4 to 6 hours; it can be detected in the urine one hour after use and up to 72 hours after use; Methamphetamine metabolites can be detected in the body for 2 to 4 days.

Methamphetamine is typically used on a regular daily basis and users tend to integrate their drug use into many of their daily activities. Withdrawal frequently doesn't occur for 90 days from the time of the last use, making treatment a long-time process. The most effective treatments for methamphetamine addiction are cognitive behavioral interventions. These approaches are designed to help modify the patient's thinking, expectancies, and behaviors and to increase skills in coping with various life stressors. The 12 step program has been shown to have the greatest success rate among methamphetamine users.

If you or a family member is experiencing a mental health or an alcohol or other drug-related emergency, seek immediate assistance by calling the 24-hour Suicide Prevention, Mental Health Crisis, Information and Referral Hotline: (216) 623-6888 or the United Way's First Call for Help, 211 or (216) 436-2000.