

# Methamphetamine

## **Other Names:**

speed, meth, chalk, ice, crystal, crank, glass & uppers

## **How it's used:**

smoked, snorted, injected or taken orally

## **What it looks like:**

white crystalline powder

Methamphetamine is a powerfully addictive stimulant that dramatically affects the brain and the rest of the central nervous system. Meths is an odorless, bitter-tasting, white crystalline powder that dissolves in water or alcohol. Meth has a high potential for abuse and may lead to psychological or physical dependence. Users, particularly during the withdrawal, or "tweaking" phase, may experience acute psychosis and commit acts of extreme violence.

Meth's effect on the brain and the brain's ability to recover are not entirely clear. However, injury to brain cells can be seen months after a person quits using meth. This damage affects the supply of chemicals important to physical and mental well-being. Whether addicted or not, meth users risk brain damage that may be permanent.

Manufacturing meth is called "cooking." Cooking a batch of meth is extremely dangerous due to the unstable chemicals and the toxic byproducts. Whether inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin, these chemicals pose serious health hazards.

Meth labs also can - and do - explode unexpectedly and forcefully. For every pound of finished product, the resulting 5 to 6 pounds of toxic waste typically are dumped on the ground or in nearby lakes and streams. All of these hazards mean that anyone in or near a meth lab is at risk.

## **Symptoms of meth use may include:**

- Inability to sleep
- Increased sensitivity to noise
- Nervous physical activity, like scratching
- Irritability, dizziness, or confusion
- Extreme anorexia
- Tremors or even convulsions
- Increased heart rate, blood pressure, and risk of stroke
- Presence of inhaling paraphernalia, such as razor blades, mirrors, and straws
- Presence of injecting paraphernalia, such as syringes, heated spoons, or surgical tubing

## **As the drug leaves a persons system, users can experience:**

- Irritability/aggressiveness/frustration
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Paranoia (sometimes extreme, leading to thoughts of homicide or suicide)
- Hallucinations or delusions (ex: sensation of insects crawling on the skin)
- Intense cravings for the drug

**Damaging effects of meth include physical, emotional, and mental destruction, including:**

- memory problems
- insomnia
- decreased appetite and anorexia
- increased heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature
- tremors or convulsions
- breathing problems
- lung, kidney, and liver damage
- irreversible damage to blood vessels in the brain, which can produce strokes
- increased risk of getting or transmitting HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and C, and other diseases for users who inject meth and share needles

**Signs that may indicate meth is being produced or trafficked:**

- windows covered (cardboard, black plastic) for complete privacy
- lights left on for long periods
- activity during all hours of the day or night or continuous for several days
- drug paraphernalia litter scattered in area
- porch lights coded to indicate when drugs are available
- dogs used to guard a house that has these signs
- heavy vehicle traffic or foot traffic at all times of the day or night
- people and cars stay for short periods
- taxis used to avoid license plate identification

Revised and reproduced from <http://www.samhsa.gov> - "Meth: What's Cooking in Your Neighborhood?"



630 Janet Avenue Lancaster, PA 17601  
(717) 299-2831 [www.compassmark.org](http://www.compassmark.org)

**Support Groups in Lancaster County:**

Alcoholics Anonymous (717) 394-3238  
Narcotics Anonymous (717) 393-4546  
Al-Anon (for family & friends) (877) 298-5027