

Methamphetamine

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

Overview

Methamphetamine is a highly addictive central nervous system stimulant that can be:

- injected
- snorted
- smoked
- ingested orally

Methamphetamine users feel a short yet intense "rush" when the drug is initially administered.

The effects of methamphetamine include:

- increased activity
- decreased appetite
- a sense of well being that can last from 20 minutes to 12 hours

The drug has limited medical uses for the treatment of narcolepsy, attention deficit disorders, and obesity.

Methamphetamine can easily be manufactured in clandestine laboratories using store bought materials and is the most prevalent synthetic drug manufactured in the United States. The ease of manufacturing methamphetamine and its highly addictive potential has caused the use of the drug to increase throughout the Nation. The methamphetamine problem was originally concentrated in the West but has spread throughout almost every major metropolitan area in the United States.

Yaba, the Thai name for a tablet form of methamphetamine mixed with caffeine, is appearing in Asian communities in northern California and Los Angeles areas. These tablets are popular in Southeast and East Asia where they are produced. The tablets are small enough to fit in the end of a drinking straw and are usually reddish-orange or green with various logos. There are indications that methamphetamine tablets are becoming more popular within the rave scene because of the

tablet's similar appearance to club drugs such as Ecstasy.

Health Effects

The effects of methamphetamine use can include:

- addiction
- psychotic behavior
- brain damage

Methamphetamine is highly addictive and users trying to abstain from use may suffer withdrawal symptoms that include:

- depression
- anxiety
- fatigue
- paranoia
- aggression
- intense cravings for the drug

Chronic methamphetamine use can cause:

- violent behavior
- anxiety
- confusion
- insomnia

Users can also exhibit psychotic behavior including:

- auditory hallucinations
- mood disturbances
- delusions
- paranoia, possibly resulting in homicidal or suicidal thoughts

Use of methamphetamine can cause damage to the brain that is detectable months after the use of the drug. The damage to the brain caused by methamphetamine use is similar to damage caused by Alzheimer's disease, stroke, and epilepsy.

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Production and Trafficking

Methamphetamine production, trafficking, and abuse are concentrated in the western, southwestern, and midwestern United States. Clandestine laboratories in California and Mexico are the primary suppliers of methamphetamine in the United States. Methamphetamine produced in Mexico usually enters into the U.S. through California ports of entry.

Methamphetamine is easily produced in clandestine laboratories or meth labs using a variety of ingredients available in stores. The manufacturing of methamphetamine is called "cooking". Cooking a batch of meth can be very dangerous due to the fact that the chemicals used are volatile and the by-products are very toxic. Meth labs present a danger to the meth cook, the community surrounding the lab, and the law enforcement personnel who discover the lab. A Center for Disease Control and Prevention study on hazardous substance-release events found that methamphetamine labs caused injury to 79 first responders (police officers, firefighters, EMTs, and hospital personnel) in 14 States participating in the study.

The most common injuries were:

- respiratory and eye irritation
- headache
- dizziness
- nausea and vomiting
- shortness of breath

In addition to the dangerous nature of methamphetamine production, the labs are often booby-trapped and workers are well armed.

The methamphetamine trafficking situation has significantly changed within the last decade in the United States. Outlaw motorcycle gangs and other independent laboratory operators were once the primary traffickers of methamphetamine in the United States. However, Mexico-based trafficking groups entered the illicit methamphetamine market in 1994 and now dominate the trade leaving motorcycle gangs with a small share of the market. Mexico based trafficking groups dominate the market for many reasons, including their ability to obtain large quantities of the chemicals needed to produce the drug, their access to established smuggling and distribution networks, and their control over "super labs" (laboratories capable of producing

in excess of 10 pounds of methamphetamine in one 24-hour production cycle).

Law enforcement reporting indicates that methamphetamine laboratories have been discovered on federal lands throughout the United States. Methamphetamine laboratories often are discovered in or near caves, cabins, recreational areas, abandoned mines, and private vehicles located on or adjacent to federal lands.

Legislation

Methamphetamine is a Schedule II narcotic under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), Title II of the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970. The chemicals that are used to produce methamphetamine are also controlled under the Comprehensive Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996 (MCA). This legislation broadened the controls on listed chemicals used in the production of methamphetamine, increased penalties for the trafficking and manufacturing of methamphetamine and listed chemicals, and expanded the controls of products containing the licit chemicals ephedrine, pseudoephedrine and phenylpropanolamine (PPA).

The Methamphetamine Anti-Proliferation Act was passed in July 2000. The act strengthens sentencing guidelines, provides training for Federal and State law enforcement officers on methamphetamine investigations and the handling of the chemicals used in clandestine meth labs. It also puts in place controls on the distribution of the chemical ingredients used in methamphetamine production and expands substance abuse prevention efforts.

Street Terms

*Bikers Coffee * Chalk * Chicken Feed * Crank*

*Crystal Meth * Glass * Go-Fast * Ice*

*Methlies Quick * Poor Man's Cocaine * Shab*

*Speed * Stove Top * Trash * Yellow Barn*

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www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/methamphetamine