



COOKING UP DANGER

The Making of a Deadly Drug

You might not have heard of pseudoephedrine, but if you've ever had the flu, you might have used it to help ease the pain of a sore throat or a bad cough. Pseudoephedrine is the active ingredient in most cough medicines, and it's safe when used as directed.

When pseudoephedrine is cooked up and mixed with chemicals like ammonia, antifreeze, kerosene and battery acid, the safe over-the-counter cough remedy becomes a deadly drug: Methamphetamine – also known as **chalk, crank, crystal, glass, tweak, speed, black beauties and ice.**

Meth is usually cooked in makeshift meth labs or in kitchen sinks and bathtubs – and the process of making meth is just as dangerous as using it. The chemicals used in meth give off deadly, volatile fumes – fumes that can blow up an entire building. People who make meth have to wear masks to avoid breathing in the toxic gases.

It's a felony to make, use, buy, or sell meth. Get caught with it, and you'll most likely end up in jail for a long time. The consequences of meth use don't end there, though: A felony conviction can haunt you for the rest of your life, making it hard to go to school, find a job, or rent an apartment. In addition, many former meth users battle addictions and cravings for years.

MOUthing OFF

Saying "No" to Meth

It's not hard to walk away from meth – after all, who wants brain damage and rotten teeth? Here are a few lines to use if someone offers you meth:

- "Dude, have you seen what that stuff does to you? No thanks."
- "Sorry, I like having teeth."
- "No way. That stuff eats your brain."


KNOW THE FACTS

Test Yourself!

How much do you know about meth? Take this quiz and find out.

1. One of the ingredients in meth is Dramamine, the active ingredient in cough medicine.
 True False
2. Meth contains battery acid, ammonia and antifreeze.
 True False
3. Because meth speeds up your metabolism, meth users look much younger.
 True False
4. Meth permanently destroys your brain tissue.
 True False
5. "Crash" is a common street name for meth.
 True False

Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False

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METH

METHAMPHETAMINE



THE UGLY TRUTH

CRASH AND BURN

A Day in the Life of a Meth Addict

The battery acid and the other chemicals that you've been smoking have been eating away at your teeth for months. There are scars and sores all over your body, too. You've been picking and scratching at your face, arms and legs because you feel like you've got bugs crawling all over you. You don't sleep much, and you can't remember the last time you ate anything.

None of that matters to you, though: All you care about is meth.

A flash of pain surges through your body. You're coming down now, and soon you'll be experiencing agonizing withdrawal symptoms like paranoia, panic, rage and hallucinations.

Another flash of pain. You grind your teeth and feel something break. A rotten tooth falls out of your mouth and onto the floor. You don't notice that, though. All you care about is getting more meth to dull the pain.

GETTING HOOKED

Some people think that only weak people get hooked on drugs like meth. After all, what kind of person would do a drug that has such nasty-looking side effects? The truth is, though, anybody can get addicted to drugs. It doesn't matter if you're a guy or a girl; black or white; rich or poor: Once you start using meth, it takes over.

Meth is short for "methamphetamine," a powerful stimulant that users smoke, snort, or inject. Once it's in your system meth goes straight to your brain, flooding it with dopamine – that's the chemical that your brain usually produces when you're doing something enjoyable, like hanging out with a friend, watching a funny movie, or exercising. Users get hooked on that euphoric feeling – and that's when the trouble starts.

Soon, your brain is unable to produce dopamine naturally – users have to use meth to feel anything. Eventually, users get so hooked on meth that it doesn't even make them feel high anymore – but the withdrawal symptoms are so painful that they have to keep using.

Here's the really scary thing about meth: It messes up your brain. Permanently. Meth is made of some nasty chemicals – battery acid and antifreeze are two common ingredients – and those chemicals eat away at your brain. Hard core meth users end up with severe, permanent damage to the parts of the brain that control things like movement and emotion. That's why meth addicts get twitchy and moody – they're actually missing parts of their brain.

A DEADLY RUSH

The Short-term Effects of Meth Use

Meth is a stimulant, which means that it speeds up your mind and body – your heart pounds, your mind races; you feel euphoric and unstoppable. That unstoppable feeling is one of the things that makes meth so dangerous – meth users feel like they can do anything.

It doesn't take long before meth starts to take its toll on your body and brain. The short term side effects of meth use include:

- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Convulsions
- Risk of heart attack
- Depression
- Aggression
- Addiction

NOT A PRETTY PICTURE

The Long-Term Effects of Meth Use

Meth doesn't just speed up your brain and body – it also speeds up the aging process, which means that if you use meth regularly you'll end up looking old. It doesn't take long for an 18- or 20-year old meth user to look like they're 50 or 60 years old. That's not all, though. Some of the other long-term effects of meth use include:

- Paranoia
- Hallucinations and delusions
- Sores that don't heal
- Stroke
- Acne
- Rotten teeth
- Brain damage
- Twitching and convulsions
- Death
- Violent, aggressive behavior

Meth users are pretty easy to spot – they look old and worn out, and they're usually twitching and jerking. Another way to pick out a meth user? "Meth mouth" – black, cracked and rotten teeth caused by the hazardous chemicals in meth.



A BLEAK FUTURE

Jason's Story

Jason Walker sits in a cell in Honolulu, Hawaii, serving a jail sentence for the murder of his 63-year-old landlady. Jason's sentence is 30 years, but he'll probably be dead before he's served his time. His heart is damaged, his brain is decaying and even though he's only 22 years old, he's already had one stroke.

Jason was 19 years old the first time he tried meth, and he was hooked right away. Pretty soon, all he cared about was meth. He lost his job and his friends, and he even lost his car – he sold it to buy more meth.

A few weeks after his 21st birthday, Jason got fired from his job at a gas station – he'd only been working there for a few months, but he'd called in sick 11 times. When he picked up his last paycheck, he went on a meth bender. He stayed high for three weeks straight. He stopped paying his bills, and when his landlord knocked on the door to demand the rent money he owed her, Jason flew into a rage. He grabbed a baseball bat from the closet and hit his landlady more than 20 times. A neighbor heard the commotion and called the cops.

Jason doesn't remember killing anyone, but he knows he's guilty. He spends every day thinking about how meth ruined his life. He lives in fear of having another stroke or a heart attack, and he doesn't think he'll live to be 30.

At 22 – the age when most people his age are finishing college, finding jobs and starting their lives – Jason is slowly dying. His entire life is over, all because of meth.