

# TIPS for TEENS

## METHAMPHETAMINE



### THE TRUTH ABOUT METHAMPHETAMINE (METH)<sup>1</sup>

**SLANG: METH/SPEED/CRYSTAL/CRANK/  
CHALK/TINA/TWEAK/GO-FAST/ICE/  
GLASS/UPPERS**

## GET THE FACTS

**METHAMPHETAMINE AFFECTS YOUR BRAIN.** Meth causes changes in the brain circuits that control reward, stress, decision-making, and impulse control, making it more and more difficult to stop using even when it is having negative effects on your life and health. Frequent use also can lead to tolerance and withdrawal, so you need more of the drug just to feel normal. Additional effects of using meth can include anxiety and depression, chronic fatigue, paranoid or delusional thinking, and serious psychological illness.<sup>2,3</sup>

**METHAMPHETAMINE AFFECTS YOUR BODY.** Using meth increases heart rate, blood pressure, and risk of stroke. Other negative consequences of long-term meth use are extreme weight loss, severe dental problems ("meth mouth"), and skin sores caused by scratching.<sup>4</sup> Meth use affects the levels of dopamine in your brain. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that affects, among other things, movement, motivation, emotions, and feelings of pleasure.<sup>5</sup> Because meth causes a flood of dopamine to the brain, the natural supply gets depleted. As a result, activities that would normally increase dopamine and, therefore, pleasure (such as listening to music or eating a delicious meal) may no longer do so, which can lead to depression.<sup>6</sup>

**METHAMPHETAMINE AFFECTS YOUR SELF-CONTROL.** Meth is an addictive drug that can cause aggression, violent behavior, and psychosis (loss of contact with reality).<sup>7,8</sup>

**METHAMPHETAMINE IS NOT ALWAYS WHAT IT SEEMS.** As much as 60 percent of what a person injects, snorts, or smokes is not meth. Powder sold as meth may contain many other substances, including lead acetate or mercury, both of which are toxins that can lead to poisoning.<sup>9,10</sup>

**METHAMPHETAMINE CAN KILL YOU.** High doses can cause the body to overheat to dangerous levels. Death can result from stroke, heart attack, or multiple organ problems caused by overheating.<sup>11</sup>

**METHAMPHETAMINE ADDICTION IS TREATABLE.** Behavioral treatments can help someone stop using methamphetamine and recover from addiction.<sup>12</sup>

## ? Q&A

**Q. WHAT DOES METH LOOK LIKE?**

**A. Methamphetamine is a white, odorless, bitter-tasting, crystalline powder that dissolves easily in water or alcohol.<sup>13</sup> It can be made from ingredients that are used in products such as batteries, drain cleaner, fertilizer, nail polish remover, and paint thinner.<sup>14</sup>**

**Q. WHAT IS THE "CRASH" EFFECT OF USING METH?**

**A. Using meth causes the brain to release a chemical called dopamine, which gives the user a feeling of pleasure. However, once the drug is no longer in the user's system, this pleasurable sensation can be followed by unpleasant feelings of drug withdrawal, sometimes called a "crash."<sup>15</sup> These feelings can include depression, anxiety, fatigue, and intense craving for more of the drug.<sup>16</sup> The "crash" often leads a person to use more meth to avoid these uncomfortable physical and psychological effects.<sup>17</sup>**

### THE BOTTOM LINE:

Methamphetamine (meth) is illegal, addictive, and dangerous. Talk to your parents, a doctor, a counselor, a teacher, or another adult you trust if you have questions.

### LEARN MORE:

Get the latest information on how drugs affect the brain and body at [teens.drugabuse.gov](https://teens.drugabuse.gov).

### TO LEARN MORE ABOUT METHAMPHETAMINE, CONTACT:

**SAMHSA**

**1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)**

(English and Español)

**TTY 1-800-487-4889**

**[www.samhsa.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)**

**[store.samhsa.gov](https://store.samhsa.gov)**



**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration



# BEFORE YOU RISK IT!

1

**KNOW THE LAW.** Methamphetamine is illegal in all states.<sup>18</sup>

2

**GET THE FACTS.** The ignitable, corrosive, and toxic nature of the chemicals used to produce meth can cause fires, produce toxic vapors, and damage the environment.<sup>19</sup>

3

**KNOW THE RISKS.** There are a lot of risks associated with using methamphetamine, including:<sup>20,21</sup>

- Meth use can cause a “crash” after the effects wear off.
- Meth use can cause long-lasting damage to the brain.
- Meth users who inject the drugs and share needles are at risk for acquiring HIV and hepatitis.

4

**LOOK AROUND YOU.** Not everyone is using methamphetamine. In 2015, less than 1 percent of adolescents ages 12 to 17 reported currently using methamphetamine.<sup>22</sup>



## KNOW THE SIGNS

How can you tell if a friend is using meth? It may not be easy to tell, but symptoms of methamphetamine use may include:<sup>23,24</sup>

- **Inability to sleep or unusual sleep patterns**
- **Psychotic behaviors such as paranoia and hallucinations**
- **Mood swings or increased aggression**
- **Nervous obsessive activities, such as scratching**
- **Irritability, anxiety, or confusion**
- **Extreme anorexia**
- **Changes in physical appearance, including deteriorating skin and teeth**
- **Presence of injecting paraphernalia, such as syringes, burnt spoons, or surgical tubing**

## MORE INFORMATION

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR FOR RESOURCES USED IN THIS “TIPS for TEENS,” visit [store.samhsa.gov](http://store.samhsa.gov) or call 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

(English and Español).

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## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP SOMEONE WHO IS USING METH?

### BE A FRIEND. SAVE A LIFE.

Encourage your friend to stop using or seek help from a parent, teacher, or other caring adult.

For 24/7 free and confidential information and treatment referrals in English and Spanish, call SAMHSA's National Helpline at:

**1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)**

or visit the SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator at [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov)

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Justice and Drug Enforcement Administration. (2015). *Drugs of abuse: A DEA resource guide*. Retrieved from [https://www.dea.gov/pr/multimedia-library/publications/drug\\_of\\_abuse.pdf](https://www.dea.gov/pr/multimedia-library/publications/drug_of_abuse.pdf)

<sup>24,16,20</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2013). *Research report series: Methamphetamine*. (NIH Publication Number 13-4210). Retrieved from <http://www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/methrrs.pdf>

<sup>3,19</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2006). Opioids and club drugs slides. *Matrix Intensive Outpatient Treatment for People with Stimulant Use Disorders: Counselor's Family Education Manual*. Retrieved from <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Matrix-Intensive-Outpatient-Treatment-for-People-with-Stimulant-Use-Disorders-Counselor-s-Family-Education-Manual-w-CD/SMA13-4153>

<sup>5</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). (2009). Word of the day: Dopamine. *NIDA for Teens*. Retrieved from <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/word-day-dopamine>

<sup>6,18,21,24</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2014). Drug facts: Methamphetamine (meth). *NIDA for Teens*. Retrieved from <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/methamphetamine-meth>

<sup>7</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. (n.d.). *Commonly abused drug charts*. Retrieved from <http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/commonly-abused-drugs/health-effects#meth>

<sup>8</sup> The Meth Project Foundation. (n.d.). What is meth-induced psychosis? *The Meth Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.methproject.org/answers/what-is-meth-induced-psychosis.html#Psychotic-Behavior>

<sup>9</sup> Fries, A., Anthony, R. W., Cseko, A., Gaither, C. C., & Shulman, E. (2008). *The price and purity of illicit drugs: 1981-2007*. Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses. Retrieved from <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/275358-the-price-and-purity-of-illicit-drugs-1981-2007.html>

<sup>10</sup> Poulsen, E. J., Mannis, M. J., & Chang, S. D. (1996). Keratitis in methamphetamine abusers. *Cornea* 15, 77-82.

<sup>12</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2013). What treatments are effective for people who abuse methamphetamine? *Research report series: Methamphetamine*. Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/methamphetamine/what-treatments-are-effective-methamphetamine-abusers>

<sup>13</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2017). *Drug facts: Methamphetamine*. Retrieved from <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/methamphetamine>

<sup>14</sup> The Meth Project Foundation. (n.d.). What's in meth. *The Meth Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.methproject.org/answers/whats-meth-made-of.html#Whats-in-Meth>

<sup>15,17</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2006). The brain's response to methamphetamines. *NIDA for Teens*. Retrieved from <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/teachers/mind-over-matter/methamphetamine>

<sup>22</sup> Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2016). *Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. (HHS Publication No. SMA 16-4984, NSDUH Series H-51). Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFR1-2015/NSDUH-FFR1-2015/NSDUH-FFR1-2015.htm>

<sup>23</sup> The Meth Project Foundation. (n.d.). How can I tell if someone is using meth? *The Meth Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.methproject.org/answers/how-can-i-tell-if-someone-is-using-meth.html#Signs-of-Use>