Methamphetamines: Nothing To Rave About

"Meth," "speed," "chalk," "ice," "crystal," "crank," "fire," and "glass" are street terms for a man-made drug called methamphetamine. Methamphetamine is among the most addictive substances around. The drug can easily be made in secret laboratories from relatively inexpensive over-the-counter ingredients. This white, odorless, bitter tasting crystalline powder can be smoked, snorted, injected, or swallowed. Teens may think that the bizarre way the drug makes them feel is cool; however, the drug is altering their brains—maybe permanently.

Methamphetamine is not usually sold and bought on the streets like many other illicit drugs. Instead, people obtain supplies through friends or acquaintances. It is typically a more closed or hidden sale. Most teens who come in contact with methamphetamines will do so attending a "rave" or private club. It is at these clubs where the drug is often sold.

Because methamphetamines can be made with readily available, inexpensive materials, there is great variation in the processes and chemicals used. This means that the final product that is sold as "methamphetamine" many not be that drug at all. Uncertainties about the drug's sources and its content make it difficult to know how powerful this substance may be and what the consequences are of this potent mixture.

Signs of a Methamphetamine User

Users may experience

- signs of agitation, excited speech, decreased appetites, and increased physical activity levels (Other common symptoms include dilated pupils, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, and elevated body temperature.)
- occasional episodes of sudden and violent behavior, intense paranoia, visual and auditory hallucinations, and bouts of insomnia
- a tendency to compulsively clean and groom and repetitively sort and disassemble objects such as cars and other mechanical devices.

Long-Term Effects of the Drug

Methamphetamines can

- change the brain's ability to manufacture a chemical substance essential for the normal experience of pleasure and for normal psychological functioning. These changes in the brain can persist long after the user stops taking the drugs.
- cause a stroke
- create a mental disorder that may mimic schizophrenia
- be extremely addictive.

Kicking the Habit

There are currently no medications available to treat addiction or overdose to methamphetamines. Withdrawal from this drug is typically characterized by drug craving, depression, disturbed sleep patterns, and increased appetite.

Take Action

- Skip parties where you know there will be alcohol and drugs.
- Get involved in drug-free activities.
- Urge your school, faith community, or neighborhood to organize an anti-drug rally.
- Talk to school counselors about starting an alcohol or drug abuse prevention program.

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