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Spotlighting Teen Issues

**for
Parents**

Methamphetamine Awareness

Kelli R. Moore, Extension Agent - Cumberland County

What Is Methamphetamine?

Meth is a powerfully addictive stimulant made by “cooking” ingredients containing ephedrine or pseudo-ephedrine and a variety of toxic and explosive chemicals. One miscalculation in an ingredient or cooking temperature and the volatile mixture can explode like a bomb!

This substance can be made from many different ingredients that can be purchased anywhere. Tougher laws are making it more difficult to purchase one of the main ingredients, pseudoephedrine, which is found in most common cold and allergy medicines. Other ingredients commonly used to make meth include rubbing alcohol, acetone (found in fingernail polish remover), gasoline antifreeze, battery acid and engine starter fluid.

Why Do Teens Try Meth?

Teens may try this very addictive drug for many different reasons, including stress, peer pressure, boredom and the desire for a thrill. Today’s society places a lot of pressure on teens to fit in. To hear about teenagers who have tried meth, visit the Governor’s website on meth at http://www.methfreetn.org/share_story/archive.php. These stories will help parents to understand that many teens thought meth was something they could try once without becoming addicted.

What Does Meth Do?

Meth has a more devastating impact on people than any other drug because of how it attacks both the mind and body. Meth can cause a person to have hallucinations and can cause memory loss. It can also increase the risk for seizures.

Meth is a neurotoxin that has a negative effect on both dopamine- and serotonin-containing neurons in the brain. Neurological damage from prolonged use is very common as are cardiac problems. Over a period of time, users’ gums will turn black and their teeth will begin to decay. Their skin will become dry and gray. Users may even develop the sensation of having bugs under their skin. This causes

many of them to scratch, and they develop sores on their bodies. Malnourishment is also a common side effect, resulting in weight loss. Users may also develop brittle bones that break easily. Eventually continuing users will pay the ultimate price, which is death.

Phases of Meth Addiction & Behavior

- The rush lasts about 5 to 30 minutes. The user’s heart rate will increase. Metabolism, blood pressure and pulse rate will soar. The user will experience feelings of pleasure.
- During the high, meth users experience a boost in self-confidence and may think that they can do anything. Most users in this state will ignore their physical limitations and are willing to try anything. This high can last from 4 to 6 hours.
- The next stage is called binging, which can last from three to 15 days. In this phase the user will try to maintain the high for as long as possible. Users become



hyperactive, both mentally and physically, and may not sleep for days at a time.

- Tweaking, the most dangerous phase, comes next. They have not slept in three to 15 days and are very irritable and paranoid. Coming in contact with a user in this phase can be very dangerous. The user is frustrated because no dosage will re-create the high and may become violent.
- The crash phase may last anywhere from one to three days. The user will be very lethargic and will sleep.
- Normal. After the crash phase, users may appear normal for about two to 14 days. Their health will be slightly deteriorated from before the use.
- Withdrawal is the final phase and may last from 30 to 90 days. Users generally become depressed or lethargic. They may even become suicidal, craving their next meth hit.

During the withdrawal phase, many meth addicts return to using the drug because it makes the unpleasant feelings go away.

Street Names for Meth

Methamphetamine is also commonly called speed, crank, glass, chalk, fire, tweak and yaba. Although the name may change, one thing remains the same: METH IS DANGEROUS!!

Addiction rates for meth users are extremely high! Many addicts report that they were addicted after their first use

Signs of Meth Use

- Anxiousness
- Nervousness
- Incessant talking
- Extreme moodiness and irritability
- Repetitious behavior like picking at skin or pulling out hair
- Sleep disturbances
- False sense of confidence and power
- Aggressive or violent behavior
- Lack of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Severe depression

If your teen exhibits any of these signs, talk with him or her and try to find out the cause. Continue to monitor their behavior and seek help.

What Can I Do to Help My Teen Avoid Meth??

Teens whose parents talk to them about drugs are half as likely to use them as those whose parents did not talk to them.

Resources

Here are some places to find more information or to get help:

www.methresources.gov

www.MethFreeTn.org

www.emt.org/userfiles/METHfactsheet.final.pdf

To Report a Meth Lab

www.tbi.state.tn.us/methwatch/tnmethwatch.htm
1-877-866-6384

To Get Help for Someone on Meth or Any Drug

Tennessee Association of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (TAADAS)
1-800-889-9789

Tennessee Access to Recovery (TN-ATR)
Toll Free (866)3584287

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