



NIDA NOTES

Tearoff

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Methamphetamine Abuse Alert

In response to indicators that show methamphetamine abuse increasing across the Nation, NIDA sent a bulletin containing current, science-based information on methamphetamine to more than 200,000 drug abuse treatment providers, hospital emergency room workers, and other health services practitioners.

The four-page Community Drug Alert Bulletin on Methamphetamine arms health care providers with important information they can use to mount effective prevention and treatment responses to methamphetamine's threat to the public health. Highlights are below.

What Methamphetamine Is

Methamphetamine is a powerfully addictive stimulant that dramatically affects many areas of the central nervous system. The drug has a high potential for widespread abuse because it can easily be made in clandestine laboratories from relatively inexpensive over-the-counter ingredients.

Methamphetamine can be purchased at a low cost, is available in many forms, and can be smoked, snorted, injected, or orally ingested.

Methamphetamine is sometimes called "speed," "meth," and "chalk." In its smoked form, the drug is often called "ice," "crystal," "crank," "fire," and "glass."

Who Uses Methamphetamine

Traditionally associated with white male blue-collar workers, methamphetamine reportedly is being used by diverse groups in all regions of the country.

Use is increasing among men who have sex with men and use other drugs; young adults who attend "raves" or go to private clubs; homeless and runaway youth; commercial sex workers; members of motorcycle gangs; and people in occupations that demand long hours, mental alertness, and physical endurance.

New Trends and Patterns of Use

Emerging evidence indicates that users increasingly are administering methamphetamine intravenously. Injecting the drug puts the user at increased risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and other infectious diseases.

Often, methamphetamine is used in dangerous combination with other substances, including cocaine and "crack" cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and alcohol.

Methamphetamine is not usually sold and bought on the street. Users report that they obtain the drug from friends and acquaintances.

Methamphetamine, used primarily in urban areas of California, has become a substantial drug problem in other sections of the West and Southwest as well as rural and urban areas of the South and Midwest. Its use also is emerging in urban areas in the East.

Signs of Methamphetamine Use

Some common signs of methamphetamine use include:

- agitation, excited speech, decreased appetite, increased physical activity, dilated pupils, and nausea and vomiting;
 - occasional episodes of sudden and violent behavior, intense paranoia, visual and auditory hallucinations, and bouts of insomnia; and
 - a tendency to compulsively clean and groom and repetitively disassemble and sort objects.
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Guidelines for Preventing Methamphetamine Use

Effective prevention of drug use begins with assessing the specific nature of the drug problem within the local community and adapting prevention programs accordingly. Prevention programs should start early, be comprehensive, and stress key points repeatedly. Family-focused prevention efforts have a greater impact than strategies that focus on parents only or children and adolescents only.

Guidelines for Treating Methamphetamine Addiction

Cognitive behavioral interventions that help modify a patient's thinking and harmful behaviors and teach skills to cope with stressful situations have been effective.

Currently no medications are available to treat methamphetamine addiction or overdose. However, antidepressant medications can be prescribed which can serve to combat the depressive symptoms frequently experienced during methamphetamine withdrawal.

For More Information

NIDA's Community Drug Alert Bulletin on Methamphetamine and the [NIDA Research Report, Methamphetamine Abuse and Addiction](#) (NCADI publication #PHD756) can be obtained from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847, 1-800-729-6686. These publications and additional information about methamphetamine can be found on the NIDA home page on the World Wide Web at www.nida.nih.gov. Fact sheets and recorded messages about methamphetamine abuse and addiction can also be found on [Infobox](#), NIDA's automated information retrieval system, at (888) 644-6432.

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