



Dispelling Myths About Methamphetamine Addiction & Treatment

North Dakota Department of Human Services

Meth Facts:

- A powerfully addictive stimulant that dramatically affects the central nervous system, **methamphetamine** is made from rather inexpensive common ingredients.
- Sometimes referred to as "speed," "meth," "chalk," "ice," "crystal," "crank," or "glass," methamphetamine comes in many forms and is smoked, snorted, injected, or orally ingested.
- While the onset of meth dependency is much more intense and rapid than other substances that are abused, **people can and do recover from meth addictions.**
- It is used by people of all ages and backgrounds and is often purchased through family, friends, or acquaintances.

Meth Impact on Health:

- Methamphetamine use has been linked to memory loss, aggression, violence, psychotic behavior, and potential heart and neurological damage.
- It also contributes to the transmission of hepatitis, HIV/AIDS, and other infectious diseases.

Symptoms of Meth Usage:

- Methamphetamine users can be identified by agitation, excited speech, loss of appetite, and increased physical activity.
- Other common symptoms include: dilated pupils, high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, chest pain, shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, and elevated body temperature.
- Users may experience periods of sudden and violent behavior, intense paranoia, hallucinations, and insomnia.
- Some users compulsively clean and groom or repetitively sort and disassemble objects, such as cars and other mechanical devices.

The Key to Successful Treatment = Sufficient access to the right level of care at the right time for an appropriate length of time.

Treatment Facts:

- Withdrawal from methamphetamine is characterized by drug craving, depressed mood, disturbed sleep patterns, and increased appetite.
- Antidepressants may be prescribed during withdrawal.
- People recovering from meth **benefit from the same treatment strategies used to address other addictions.** For example, therapy designed to modify a patient's thinking and behaviors in order to increase coping skills, is effective.
- Matching an individual's symptoms to the appropriate treatment level, and retaining people in treatment and services for sufficient time are important for successful treatment. Some people can successfully be treated on an outpatient basis. **To be effective, treatment must be tailored to each individual's needs.**

Over →

Treatment Facts:

(continued):

- Recovering from substance abuse addictions, including meth addiction, is an ongoing process that is very similar to chronic illness management.
- It is **unrealistic to expect a “cure.”** Recovery may involve more than one treatment episode.
- There are currently no medications available to treat addiction or overdose due to amphetamine-like drugs such as methamphetamine.
- Residential and outpatient treatment can be effective for people with methamphetamine addiction, and generally require a minimum of 90 days, including a detoxification period long enough for some clearing of thinking and judgment.

Trends:

- Methamphetamine is often used in combination with other substances, including cocaine/crack, marijuana, heroin, and alcohol.
- Meth is a substantial drug problem in the West and Midwest and is emerging on the East Coast.

Prevention:

- Prevention programs should start early, be comprehensive, and repetitively stress key points.
- Family-focused prevention efforts seem to have a greater impact than strategies focusing only on parents or young people.

Principles of Effective Treatment:

1. **No single treatment is appropriate for all individuals.** Matching treatment setting, interventions, and services to individual needs is crucial to treatment success.
2. **Treatment should be readily available.** Treatment opportunities may be lost, if people cannot access treatment.
3. **Effective treatment attends to multiple needs.** Treatment must address drug use and any medical, psychological, social, vocational, and legal problems.
4. **Individual treatment and service plans must be assessed continually and modified to meet changing needs.** A person may require varying combinations of services during treatment and recovery. Treatment should be appropriate for an individual's age, gender, ethnicity, and culture.
5. **Remaining in treatment for an adequate period of time is critical.** According to research, the threshold of significant improvement is reached at about 3 months of treatment. Additional treatment can produce further progress toward recovery.
6. **Counseling and other behavioral therapies are critical components of effective treatment.** Therapy helps address motivation, builds skills to resist drug use, and improves problem solving abilities and an individual's ability to function in the family and community.
7. **Addicted individuals with coexisting mental disorders should be assessed and treated for both.**
8. **Medical detoxification is only the first stage of treatment.**
9. **Treatment does not need to be voluntary to be effective.** Sanctions and enticements at home, work or in the corrections system increase treatment entry, retention, and outcomes.
10. **Possible drug use during treatment must be monitored continuously.** Testing can help people withstand urges to use drugs and can help adjust treatment plans, if needed.
11. **Recovery from addiction is a long-term process.**

Source:

National Institute on Drug Abuse
www.drugabuse.gov/MethAlert/MethAlert.html

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