

## **Methamphetamine**

The news is full of information regarding the opioid crisis. However, methamphetamine has made a comeback. In fact, many criminal justice agencies are currently seeing more individuals testing positive for methamphetamine than opioids. Much of the meth in Indiana comes from cartels in central Mexico via hidden compartments in vehicles or in people's backpacks.

Methamphetamine is a powerful, highly addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system. Crystal methamphetamine is a form of the drug that looks like glass fragments or shiny, bluish-white rocks. Other common names for methamphetamine include blue, crystal, ice, meth, and speed.

People can take methamphetamine by smoking, swallowing, snorting, or injecting the drug. Because the "high" from the drug both starts and fades quickly, people often take repeated doses. In some cases, people give up food and sleep while continuing to take the drug every few hours for up to several days.

Methamphetamine increases the amount of dopamine in the brain, which is involved in movement, motivation, and reinforcement of rewarding behaviors. The drug's ability to rapidly release high levels of dopamine in reward areas of the brain strongly reinforces drug-taking behavior, making the user want to repeat the experience.

### **Effects of Meth Use**

Short-term health effects from using methamphetamine include increased wakefulness and physical activity, decreased appetite, and increased blood pressure and body temperature.

Long-term health effects include risk of addiction, risk of contracting HIV and hepatitis, severe dental problems ("meth mouth"), intense itching, leading to skin sores from scratching, violent behavior, extreme weight loss, anxiety, confusion, memory loss, sleeping problems, paranoia, and hallucinations.

In studies of people who used methamphetamine over a long period of time, severe changes also affected areas of the brain involved with emotion and memory. Although some of these changes may reverse after being off the drug for a year or more, other changes may be irreversible. A recent study even suggests that people who once used methamphetamine have an increased the risk of developing Parkinson's disease.

Because methamphetamine is so addictive, when people stop taking it, withdrawal symptoms typically occur. These symptoms can include anxiety, fatigue, severe depression, psychosis, and intense drug cravings.

### **Can a person overdose on methamphetamine?**

Yes! Methamphetamine overdose often leads to a stroke, heart attack, or organ problems. In 2017, about 15 percent of all drug overdose deaths involved methamphetamine, and 50 percent of those deaths also involved an opioid, with half of those cases related to the synthetic opioid fentanyl.

### **How is methamphetamine addiction treated?**

There are currently no government-approved medications to treat methamphetamine addiction. The most effective treatments so far are behavioral therapies, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, which helps patients recognize, avoid, and cope with the situations likely to trigger drug use, and motivational incentives, which uses vouchers or small cash rewards to encourage patients to remain drug-free. Drug Courts, such as the Adams County Drug Court, utilize these effective treatment strategies. Community support and mental health services are vital to people maintaining sobriety.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.drugfreeadamscounty.org](http://www.drugfreeadamscounty.org).