

Methadone is a drug used to treat drug addicts. It is prescribed in a controlled environment, like a hospital, or outpatient unit, because controlled use can ease the detoxification effects such as tremors, severe body aches and paranoia.

"Meth" is a methamphetamine drug that is "cooked" by the supplier, or drug dealer. It is made of common chemicals that, when mixed and cooked (literally cooked on the stove) emit noxious fumes and are highly volatile, or explosive. Sometimes a meth lab will explode during the cooking process. When this happens, it blows the whole structure apart.

Despite the potential lethality of cooking, it is easily and cheaply made. Therefore, it is sold cheaply, as compared to other drugs such as cocaine. Because it is so cheap, the incidence of addiction is much higher in rural areas.

Other street names for meth includes crystal, ice, clear, crank and glass. It can be smoked, snorted, shot up, or put into bodily crevices in ways that clear minded people would never imagine.

Meth is extremely addictive, often after only a single use. It is considered to be as addictive as heroin. Its addictive qualities are similar to amphetamines, but the drug meth is quick acting. It causes a quick high. The first few highs are very euphoric. But the high disappears before the blood concentration is reduced. In other words, it stops working even while it is still in the person's blood stream. Therefore, more of the drug is required more often to try to get back to the original euphoric / high state. The spiraling effect of meth abuse is much like a cat chasing its own tail. The euphoric high may not ever be achieved again, but because addiction to Meth comes on so quickly and so strong the user will keep getting high. Therefore, it is both psychologically and physically addictive.

Paranoia, delusions, aggression, weight loss, rotten teeth, and "picking" at their skin until they have sores are typical effects. Intolerance of sweets may be due to the dental condition. However, Meth addicts tend to be picky eaters with a very low appetite. Long term abuse causes damage to the brain and central nervous system, resulting in learning disabilities in younger people, impaired ability to think clearly and reasonably as well as impaired ability to learn new information and integrate this with prior learning. Additional long term effects may include memory loss, repetitive nonproductive behavior (rocking, hitting the head on a wall, etc.), uncontrolled motor activity. These are caused by permanent damage to the brain and central nervous system. Meth use causes dopamine to be released, resulting in the feelings of euphoria mentioned earlier. However, use of Meth also *damages* dopamine production in the brain, which can result in a permanently lowered production of dopamine. This can lead to increasingly feeling displeased with life in general and people in particular.

Treatment results are variable, depending upon the motivation of the addict and pressures upon the patient to get clean. Pressures may include legal action, family pressure, counseling, drug treatment classes, community service. The most aggressive treatment is inpatient, which is typically at least 6 weeks in duration. Outpatient treatment is also available, but typically with less success than inpatient.

Unfortunately, the loss of teeth, weight loss, aggressive behavior, paranoia (and the list goes on) rarely are enough for the addict to stop. External pressure is a more likely tipping point. Legal problems can be a great motivator, as even an addict can reason that life out of prison is better than life in prison.

Not a pretty picture.

Remember that when an addict is confronted the usual response is denial.