

- **Methamphetamine**

- Methamphetamine is a highly addictive and highly potent synthesized central nervous system stimulant. The effects of “meth” are long lasting and users have been known to stay up for days on end during binge sessions. Although meth is derived from a similar compound, amphetamine, the effects of meth last much longer due to the large amount that makes it to the brain. Even though meth can be prescribed by a doctor, the amount that is medically therapeutic is much lower than the amount needed to be abused. Due to the restrictions put in place by recent policies restricting pharmaceuticals containing methamphetamine and cold medication, along with import restrictions on pseudoephedrine (used in the production of meth), production labs have been steadily decreasing across the nation. Although the production and abuse is mainly focused in the Western, Southwestern, and Midwestern United States, the product has become more common in the northeast recently (cesar).
- **Street Names:** Chalk, Ice, Glass, Crystal, Meth, Speed, Crank, Redneck cocaine, Super Ice, L.A. Grass, L.A. Ice, Quartz, Batu, Hanyak, and Hiropon (Cesar).
- **Uses:** Methamphetamine can be administered into the body through several methods. Although the primary method utilized is smoking the methamphetamine crystalline rock, meth can also be injected, taken orally, or snorted. Once administered, the drug’s effects can first be felt as a rush within 5-30 minutes (depending on the method of administration); afterwards the other effects of the drug can be felt for the following 6-12 hours. Although the effects of the drug last for a long period of time, meth abusers take the drug continuously to avoid the harsh, severe withdrawal effects (cesar)
- **Physical Effects:** Methamphetamine causes a release of the neurotransmitter dopamine which results in the drug’s effect on pleasure. After this rush the user’s body continues to feel on edge. After the effects wear off and the body experiences a depletion of dopamine the user begins to feel depressed. Methamphetamine stimulates locomotor activities like reflexes and basic physical movements causing “stereotypic behaviors” or random, repetitive, compulsive actions like twitching. Other short-term effects include increased physical activity, increased blood pressure or breathing rate, elevated body temperature, heavy sweating, nausea, vomiting, hyperthermia, uncontrollable jaw-setting or teeth cracking, sores, skin infections, seizure, convulsions, and sudden death (cesar).
- **Psychological Effects:** Because of its addictive properties, users commonly experience bursts of energy, talkativeness, and excitement. They will often go hours or days without food or sleep. Other psychological effects include euphoria, decreased appetite, insomnia, and unpredictable behavior (cesar).
- **Long-Term Effects:** Methamphetamine can result in the destruction of brain cells that contain dopamine and serotonin. This can lead to symptoms similar to that of Parkinson’s disease. Those who use the drug in large doses or use it frequently may experience increased nervousness, irritability, paranoia, and occasionally violent behavior. A dangerous stage of Methamphetamine use is what is called “tweaking”. This occurs when a user hasn’t slept in three to fifteen days and is very irritable and frustrated. This person would crave Methamphetamine but be unable to reach his or her original high, resulting in increasing frustration. This person would be very unstable and may react violently. Although the person may seem to be normal, his or her eyes would move ten times faster than it regularly does, the user’s voice would have a slight quiver, and the user’s movements would be quick and jerky. Other long-term effects are damaged nerve terminals in the brain, increased heart beat, irregular heart beat, increased blood pressure, brain damage similar to Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s disease, repetitive motor activity, performing repetitive meaningless tasks, weightloss, prolonged anxiety, paranoia, or insomnia, psychotic behavior, violence, fornication or the sensation of bugs creeping on one’s skin, visual and auditory hallucinations, homicidal or suicidal thoughts, acute lead poisoning, strokes, heart infections, lung disease, kidney damage, liver damage, an increased risk of HIV, Hepatitis B and C, increased risk behavior, and death. If the user is pregnant she may experience premature birth, her baby may suffer cardiac defects, cleft palate, and other birth defects. (cesar)

Source:

Center for Substance Abuse Research [<http://www.cesar.umd.edu>]