

THE DANGERS OF METHAMPHETAMINE

By Susan Cafferty

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Do you ever read the police report in the local newspapers? I try to avoid it, but every time I take a look, I see people who have been charged with using or selling methamphetamine. The CEE-VI Drug Task Force has been busy lately. Methamphetamine is a very dangerous drug, but its use has increased markedly in the US over the last decade. In the midwestern states, meth is the number two most commonly used illegal drug, second only to marijuana. About 500,000 Americans are regular users of meth, and about 2.8% of high school seniors have used it at least once.

What makes meth so popular? For starters, it is readily available and relatively cheap (compared to other illicit drugs). The ingredients that go into making meth are legal and useful. Meth labs can easily be set up in a basement or garage. The drug is then sold in one-eighth ounce units of white powder or crystals known as “eight balls,” and it is extremely addictive.

Meth is a stimulant drug (other stimulant drugs include cocaine and amphetamines). It can be swallowed, smoked, injected, or snorted. Taking meth produces a rush of euphoria, followed by an increased feeling of wakefulness, and concentration, loss of fatigue, and decreased appetite. Side effects of meth use include tremors, high blood pressure, and irregular heart beat. Chronic use of meth can lead to violent behavior, hallucinations, extreme weight loss and confusion. Meth use often results in drying of the mouth, and severe tooth decay, a condition that is sometimes called “meth mouth.” Meth users are also at increased risk of becoming infected by HIV and hepatitis.

What are the signs that a loved one is taking meth? Look for insomnia, jitteriness, shaking of the hands (tremors), and rapid heartbeat. People who use meth by injection often get skin rashes or abscesses at the injection sites. Chronic meth users become paranoid, and often neglect their personal hygiene. For youth, a sudden drop in grades, loss of interest in school or longstanding friends, sudden weight changes, and sudden rebellious, paranoid behavior are all warning signs. Indications that people are making meth include the presence of plastic tubing, unmarked mason jars, stained coffee filters, camera batteries, propane cylinders and hot plates in places like basements, garages, and unused buildings.

Can meth addiction be treated? The answer is yes, but overcoming meth addiction is really tough. Treatment programs use the Matrix Model, an approach that combines individual counseling, 12-step support, drug testing, and encouragement of non-drug-related activities. In Minnesota, drug treatment programs are available in St. Cloud, Granite Falls, and the Twin Cities.

If you need more information about treatment programs, drug addiction, or teen drug use, please call.

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise. (I think you can easily substitute meth for wine in this verse.)