

Methamphetamine Addiction and Effective Outpatient Treatment

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Methamphetamine was first produced from amphetamine in the early 1900s. Originally, it was used as an ingredient in upper respiratory decongestants and even in bronchial inhalers. By 2017, according to the National Institute of Health (NIH), the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health estimated that 14.7 million people in the U.S. had used methamphetamine at least once. Methamphetamine had become one of the country's two most popular illicit drugs, second only to cannabis.

Among the most misused of all stimulant drugs in the world, meth exceeds opioid addiction in some parts of the United States. It is also the drug most often linked to violent crime. It can cause a wide range of devastating psychological, physical, and social consequences, from extreme tooth decay ("meth mouth") to cognitive impairment. See the list of health effects from continued meth use below. Fortunately, there is effective meth addiction treatment.

What is Methamphetamine?

Also called meth, ice, crystal, and other names, methamphetamine is a very potent and extremely addictive stimulant. It is a white, odorless powder that readily dissolves in water or alcohol. It generates a feeling of euphoria. Similar to its much less potent parent

drug *amphetamine*, methamphetamine affects the central nervous system, causing users to become more physically animated and talkative, and it reduces appetite. An FDA-approved variant of methamphetamine is available by prescription but is rarely prescribed.

Methamphetamine made for illicit use is typically produced in small hidden meth labs throughout the U.S., using inexpensive ingredients, including over-the-counter pseudoephedrine (a common ingredient in popular cold medicines). But, the majority of the meth sold in the United States is manufactured by international crime organizations in Mexico. The meth produced in Mexico is potent, pure, and low-priced.

How Do People Misuse Methamphetamine?

Meth is produced in a variety of forms for illicit consumption. Versions are made to be taken orally, snorted, smoked, or injected. Injecting or smoking meth is known for causing an instant intense rush, whereas taking it orally or snorting it produces a strong high, though not the immediate overpowering rush.

Methamphetamine is frequently used by people who have developed a pattern of bingeing on the drug and then crashing after each period of intensive use. Because the effects of the high from the drug disappear quickly, even before the concentration of meth in the blood dissipates much, the user must take more and more meth, in order to maintain the feeling of being high.

Short-Term Effects of Meth Misuse

With the sense of euphoria meth use delivers, methamphetamine also releases large amounts of dopamine. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that engages the brain's *reward* process circuitry, conditioning the brain to repeat the action of taking the drug that is delivering the pleasurable sensation. This is a classic chemical characteristic of addictive drugs.

The short-term effects of meth use can include:

- Sense of euphoria
- Reduced fatigue
- Increased waking time
- Increase physical activity
- More animated behavior
- Reduced appetite
- Increased rate of respiration
- Increased blood pressure
- Increased heart rate
- Irregular heartbeat
- Hyperthermia*

*Hyperthermia is a state of far above normal body temperature. It can occur during methamphetamine overdose. Convulsions can occur during meth overdose. Without immediate medical treatment, death can result.

Long-Term Effects of Meth Misuse

Addiction is a consequence of long-term meth abuse that leads to serious health consequences and other devastating outcomes for people struggling in the powerful grip of the chemical. Meth abusers typically need to take larger or more frequent doses of meth or change their mode of using it, in order to keep getting the high sensation. Further, people addicted to meth can develop an inability to sense pleasure from any source other than the drug, which problem drives them to continued use.

The long-term effects of meth use can include:

- Insomnia
- Mood issues
- Confusion
- Intense anxiety
- Paranoia
- Diminished rate of body movement
- Reduced mental flexibility
- Verbal learning impairment
- Numerous cognitive and emotional issues
- Impaired decision-making
- Violent behaviors
- Increased risk of stroke (with irreversible brain damage)
- Auditory and/or visual hallucinations
- Skin sores
- Delusions (such as insects crawling under their skin)
- Extreme tooth decay and loss of teeth ("meth mouth")
- Weight loss

Attempts to quit taking meth after long-term frequent use can trigger withdrawal symptoms, including an intense craving for the drug, anxiety, fatigue, and depression. The changes that long-term meth abuse causes to the brain structure may account for the unique difficulty in treating meth addiction and the high risk of relapse during the early phases of treatment.

After quitting, the effects of long-term meth abuse can last for months or even years after a person stops using the drug. Stress can trigger the recurrence of previous "meth psychosis."

Treatment for Meth Addiction

There is good news regarding methamphetamine abuse, which is that addiction to the drug is treatable. People do recover from meth addiction with treatments that are effective in helping them overcome the typically numerous medical problems and personal obstacles that have resulted from long-term meth abuse as well as the issues that led to drug abuse initially.

PET scan images reveal that over time, after discontinuing meth use, impacted dopamine transporters can be restored. Neurobiological impacts from long-term meth use appear at least to be partially reversible. Abstinence from meth use further shows to lead to improved performance on tests of verbal memory, and improved health, and increased physical ability.

Note: There is continuing research on the development of pharmacological treatment for methamphetamine addiction, including exploration of possible medications, even potential vaccines to protect people from the powerful addictive impacts of the drug.

The Bigger Picture of Meth Addiction

Extending beyond the devastating effects to the health and personal lives of individuals addicted to methamphetamine, misuse of the drug has proven to be a profound threat to entire communities. Misuse of this uniquely powerful drug has been linked to problems in numerous cities throughout the country experiencing new crime waves, increased unemployment rates, child abuse and/or neglect, and a range of other serious economic and social impacts.

For one example, people who abuse meth are at increased risk of contracting HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis B or C. These contagious diseases can spread from meth users to multiple others around them, who can each spread the diseases exponentially throughout a community.

For perspective, according to the NIH, another report of the state of the meth impact on the U.S. after the first 100 years of the increasing popularity of the drug, the RAND Corporation's 2009 report estimated that misuse of methamphetamine had already cost the country over \$23 billion by 2005.

Renaissance Ranch Drug Rehab Ogden, Utah

We are an outpatient drug treatment center in Ogden, Utah. For the past 14 years, our comprehensive programs for addiction assessment and recovery have been providing effective outpatient addiction therapy to people throughout Utah. Our Ogden Utah drug treatment programs are designed to help people struggling with meth addiction understand both the medical science and experiential contributors to methamphetamine abuse and addiction.

At Renaissance, we apply drug addiction treatment best practices, to help you develop the tools to regain control of your life and maintain recovery long-term. We help each individual become empowered with this understanding and find his or her path to a

meaningful life, free from drug abuse.

For more information, or to schedule your free evaluation, contact Renaissance Ranch, Ogden UT, at (385) 222-3737, or feel free to contact us online for a quick response.

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