

If you are reading this brochure then you or someone you know probably believes that you are suffering from methamphetamine abuse. Methamphetamine is one of the most difficult addictions to overcome. The intense cravings and mentally traumatic withdrawal symptoms are harrowing but meth addiction can and has been kicked. No one needs to remain addicted.



Other Resources

- Narcotics Anonymous 12 Step Program:
www.na.org
- Crystal Meth Anonymous:
www.crystalmeth.org
- Information about Crystal Meth (search "crystal meth"):
www.camh.net
- Anonymous Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator:
<http://dasis3.samhsa.gov>
- National Helpline: 800-662-HELP (4357)
800-487-4889 (TTY)
- Text your ZIP code to 435748 (HELP4U) to find help near you.



METHAMPHETAMINE *use or addiction*

Abuse and Addiction

Abuse is any use of methamphetamine other than as prescribed and directed by a responsible doctor. Methamphetamine abuse is not as behaviorally severe as addiction but presents very serious physical and mental risks including psychosis, dementia, paranoia, heart failure, respiratory failure, accelerated tooth decay and more.

Addiction is a physical dependency upon methamphetamine due to a change in brain chemistry called *anhedonia*. The brain stops manufacturing chemicals such as dopamine because it has come to rely upon meth for the same effects. Giving up meth makes the brain and body feel deprived, and they will let the individual know it with intense cravings, terrible discomfort and very serious mental and emotional anguish. Being prepared for this is key. Remember that eventually the brain can, and will, correct the imbalance. Proper diet, exercise, and attitude can help to hasten that correction.

How to Detect Meth Dependency

Methamphetamine addiction can also be called **dependency**. The body and mind have become reliant upon methamphetamine for chemicals and processes that once came naturally. Here are some questions that might help to clarify if one has an addiction to methamphetamine.

- Have I given up things that I once enjoyed in order to use meth?
- Have I ever chosen meth over a person?
- Does meth interfere with my work or finances?
- Do I find it difficult to turn down an offer of meth?
- Do I need meth to have a good or even acceptable day?
- Do I get angry or depressed when I am denied meth?
- Am I constantly seeking, using or thinking about meth?
- Do I suffer physically or mentally when I stop using suddenly?

If anyone answers "yes" to any of these questions, they should seek help so that they can put themselves in the best position to end use and maintain control of their life.

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Effects of Chronic Methamphetamine Use

Someone with a methamphetamine addiction will suffer from some of the following symptoms:

- **Meth Mouth:** This is characterized by gum disease, huge cavities, weak enamel and rotting teeth. This ruinous phenomenon is very well documented. Photographs are available with a quick internet search.
- **Eating Disorder:** Meth can suppress appetite and individuals suffer from malnutrition as the drug is prioritized over maintaining a proper diet. Dehydration is also an issue as fluid intake is neglected.
- **Tremors:** The inability to control one's muscles, causing involuntary shaking.
- **Stroke:** Caused by lack of oxygen to the brain and causes permanent brain damage or death.
- **Heart attack:** The heart cannot cope with the stresses meth places upon it and "burns out."

None of this has to happen. Anyone can recover.

Cessation and Recovery

While there is no single definition of recovery, a good working definition is *maintaining sobriety, eliminating withdrawal symptoms and minimizing cravings*. Treatment will focus on those goals. One symptom of addiction is the belief that one is not addicted. If you cannot decide whether or not you have a problem, talk to your doctor. Your physician is legally obligated to keep this conversation private, and may be able to advise you on the first steps in your recovery. Once an individual admits their dependency, they can begin to fight it.

Even if you do not have a disorder, you may need help making good choices.

Treatment

Most addiction treatment programs utilize a variety of methods. Behavioral intervention, individual or group therapy, medication and support groups are some of the most effective commonly applied.

Detoxification is a period of purging meth from someone's system and working through the worst withdrawal symptoms. The period of detoxification will depend upon the length and severity of drug use. "Detox" is a relatively short period during recovery (recovery is the rest of your life) but withdrawal symptoms will usually last long after detox.

Therapy is an exploration of the mental attributes that help explain why use occurred and can help deal with the emotional and mental aspects of withdrawal. Therapy also helps reinforce the motivation and mentality needed for recovery.

Medication such as sleep aids may be administered by a nurse or physician to help with the anxiety, paranoia and insomnia associated with withdrawal.

Support groups help in a unique way. They provide a community of people with similar experiences and let members know that they are not alone and people do care. Support groups can be instrumental to maintaining recovery.



Withdrawal symptoms from crystal meth can last for a year or more; relapsing is a real danger. It is also another opportunity to remind yourself why you are quitting.

Treatment Facilities

Dealing with the physical symptoms and mental anguish of withdrawal is too much for anyone to bear alone. Medical supervision is widely regarded as necessary for detoxification. Treatment facilities combine many techniques with a nurturing environment to give someone the best chance at recovery. Finding one where you are comfortable is as important as the services offered.

Inpatient facilities are either a hospital or rehabilitation clinic. Some of them seem more like private homes or spas and are known as **residential programs**. The distinguishing feature of an inpatient treatment center is that for the duration of one's stay they remain within the facility. The patient has no physical contact with the outside world, creating an environment where it is difficult or impossible to obtain drugs. This gives them time to hone their refusal skills.

Outpatient programs can take place virtually anywhere. They offer many of the same services as inpatient facilities with the notable exception of round-the-clock care. An outpatient is afforded more freedom than an inpatient. This can make outpatient care more attractive to those who can handle the pressure of quitting in an uncontrolled environment.

The responsibility for recovery ultimately rests with the individual, but the right help can make all the difference.

Paying For Treatment

Treatment can be free or costly. Payment assistance is available in many different forms. Private insurance, charitable grants and government grants may be available. You may qualify for state funded programs that are paid for completely by the government: See the "Other Resources" section of this brochure for more information.

Contact a drug abuse professional. Tell them you need help. You may be surprised how eager they are to assist you.

Recovery and Your Loved Ones

One of the most difficult parts of recovery is dealing with friends and family. They may be skeptical of the user's determination or sincerity. This can be a very difficult obstacle. The key is to remember that they are recovering *for themselves*. This will help their loved ones whether they believe in the person or not.

In many cases addiction can only be conquered if the individual no longer associates with their drug-using-friends. In some cases this can mean temporarily separating from family.

You Can Do It

Despite how difficult giving up a methamphetamine habit is, it **can be done** and it will improve your life *immeasurably*. Take the first step today: ask yourself if you have a problem, and then contact a drug abuse treatment professional.

Your future can belong to you.