

# HEALTH ALERT!

## Methamphetamine: What You Need To Know To Stay Safe

(NAPSA)—While smoking or injecting methamphetamine may produce an intense sensation, that's described as a momentary "rush" or a "flash," users may quickly become addicted, using the drug with increasing frequency and in increasing doses.

Methamphetamine is an addictive stimulant that strongly activates certain systems in the brain. It's chemically related to amphetamine but the Central Nervous System (CNS) effects are greater. Both drugs have some limited therapeutic uses, but methamphetamine, which is made in illegal laboratories, has a high potential for abuse and addiction.

Street methamphetamine is referred to by many names, such as "speed," "meth," and "chalk." Methamphetamine hydrochloride, clear chunky crystals resembling ice, which can be inhaled by smoking, is referred to as "ice," "crystal," "glass" and "tina."

According to a recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 12.4 million Americans age 12 and older had tried methamphetamine at least once in their lifetimes.

The way the drug works is that methamphetamine releases high levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine, which stimulates brain cells, enhancing mood and body movement. It also appears to have a neurotoxic effect, damaging



**Using methamphetamine can cause irreversible damage to blood vessels in the brain.**

brain cells that contain dopamine and serotonin, another neurotransmitter that controls moods.

Over time, methamphetamine appears to cause reduced levels of dopamine.

Animal research going back more than 20 years shows that high doses of methamphetamine damage neuron cell endings. Dopamine- and serotonin-containing neurons do not die after methamphetamine use, but their nerve endings are cut back and regrowth appears to be limited.

As a result, taking even small amounts of methamphetamine results in increased wakefulness,

increased physical activity, decreased appetite, increased respiration, hyperthermia and euphoria. Other CNS effects include irritability, insomnia, confusion, tremors, convulsions, anxiety, paranoia and aggressiveness. Hyperthermia and convulsions can result in death.

Using this drug causes increased heart rate and blood pressure and can cause irreversible damage to blood vessels in the brain, producing strokes. Other effects include respiratory problems, irregular heartbeat and extreme anorexia. Use can result in cardiovascular collapse and death.

Methamphetamine can be taken orally, snorted, injected or smoked. Like other drugs of abuse, methamphetamine produces a sense of euphoria—a high but not a rush. In addition to its effects on the brain, methamphetamine is linked to risky sexual behaviors and users put themselves and their partners at risk for the transmission of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

For more information, visit [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov), a Web site created by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.