

## WHAT IS METH?

Methamphetamine is an addictive stimulant that can be smoked, injected, inhaled or swallowed. First introduced to the medical field in the 1930's as a decongestant, it was used in Japan in World War II to provide soldiers energy. Methamphetamine abuse did not become pronounced in the U.S. until the 1960s. Currently, meth is manufactured in makeshift laboratories using common household chemicals by extracting pseudophedrine or ephedrine from cold medicine. Other ingredients can include anhydrous ammonia, lithium metal strips from batteries, and red phosphorus found in matches. Approximately \$80.00 spent at a pharmacy and hardware store can buy ingredients to make an ounce of meth worth \$1,000. Meth is also made in Mexico and shipped across the border into the U.S.



*“ Even if we shut down every home-based lab and threw every dealer into jail, we’d still have a meth problem in this country. And it won’t go away until we do a better job of preventing people from using meth in the first place and giving addicts the treatment they need to kick the habit for good.”*

**- Senator Tom Harkin, April 21, 2005**

**Senate Hearing on Methamphetamine Abuse**

## WHAT IS METH MOUTH?

Meth mouth is unlike any other drug, candy or vice in most dentists' memories. In short stretches of time, sometimes just months, a perfectly healthy set of teeth can turn a grayish-brown, twist and begin to fall out, and take on a peculiar texture less like that of hard enamel and more like a piece of over ripe fruit.



### *Meth Teeth Symptoms*

- **Dry Mouth** - Saliva acts as a buffer against acidic substances in the mouth, neutralizing it and protecting teeth against acidic foods like lemons, acid from the gut or acidic plaque. The average person creates around one liter of saliva a day. If saliva production is reduced, oral bacteria levels can increase ten times over normal levels. Meth dries out the salivary glands. Without saliva, the acidic substances can eat away at the minerals in tooth enamel, causing holes or weak spots that turn into cavities. Other medications dry the mouth but meth is especially bad.
- **Tooth Decay** - Meth users are notorious for trying to treat cottonmouth with lots of sugary soda. The bacteria that feed on the sugars in the mouth secrete acid, which leads to more tooth decay. Also, Meth users aren't likely to floss, brush and rinse when high. A typical cavity starts in-between two teeth. It eventually invades the tooth and destroys it from the inside out. Meth teeth decay invariably starts at the gum line - it eventually spreads around the entire tooth, eating swathes of enamel in its wake.
- **Cracked Teeth** - Because the drug can make them feel anxious or nervous, causing them to clench or grind their teeth, regular meth users may develop cracks in their teeth.
- **Gum Disease** - Teeth and gums need blood to stay healthy. Meth causes the vessels that supply blood to oral tissues to shrink up. Reduced blood supply causes tissues to break down. With repeated shrinking, the blood vessels don't recover and tissues die.



**The Make A Promise  
Coalition for a Drug-Free  
Warren County**

# Let's Talk about...

# METH

**It is in Warren County  
and you need to know  
it's dangers!**

**Presented by:  
The Make a Promise Coalition for a  
Drug-Free Community**

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## MISSISSIPPI

Meth treatment admissions per 100,000 residents (2003): 19

Although cocaine remains the biggest drug threat in Mississippi, methamphetamine is not far behind. In 2003, 562 residents sought treatment for meth addiction, or about 6.1 percent of all persons seeking substance abuse treatment. This is a dramatic increase from 2000 when only 310 individuals sought treatment for a meth addiction. Mississippi state drug enforcement officials report that the drug was "virtually unheard of" until recently, and is now "approaching epidemic proportions." Accordingly, local production of the drug is on the rise: In 2004, DEA, state and local authorities seized 267 clandestine meth labs, compared to just 126 in 2000.

**Update:** The Combat Meth Act, signed by President Bush on March 9, 2006, provides minimum standards for retailers across the country that sell products containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. The law limits sales to 3.6 grams of the base ingredient (the pure ephedrine or pseudoephedrine) per day and 9 grams per 30 days, and requires that purchasers provide identification and sign a sales log. Also, sellers must now keep these products behind the counter or in a locked case and register on-line with the U.S. Attorney General.

*Sources: U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration state factsheets, the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration Treatment Episode Date Set, and the National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws.*



## Is it possible to identify a meth user?

There are several ways of identifying a meth user. Listed below is a generalized list of symptoms of a meth user, keep in mind that just because a person is experiencing the symptoms listed below does not automatically mean that they are using meth.

Users may experience: agitation, excited speech, decreased appetites, and increased physical activity levels (Other common symptoms include dilated pupils, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, and elevated body temperature). Occasional episodes of sudden and violent behavior, intense paranoia, visual and auditory hallucinations, and bouts of insomnia. A tendency to compulsively clean and groom and repetitively sort and disassemble objects such as cars and other mechanical devices.

- increased heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration
- flushed or tense appearance
- dilated pupils
- bloodshot eyes
- a chemical odor on their breath
- excessive sweating
- rapid speech
- inability to sleep or eat
- severe weightloss
- rotting teeth
- scars and open sores
- paranoia
- hallucinations (often times auditory)
- repetitive behavior
- memory loss
- depression
- psychosis
- teeth grinding
- restlessness
- tremors



*"It is never the drug itself that actually creates the problem, but rather the decision to use the drug, or sell it to others, that results in such devastation. We must do everything in our power to educate the public about the results of drug use and continue to aggressively prosecute those who chose to participate in the drug trade."*

**-Warren County Sheriff  
Martin Pace**

### Fast Facts

- **113 Meth labs have been destroyed in Warren County since 2001.**
- **Meth is currently the 2nd drug of choice in Warren County, but is quickly moving up to the drug of choice.**
- **Meth labs have been found in hotels in Warren County.**
- **Labs have even been found cooking on the engines of cars in Warren County**

**Source: Warren County Drug Court & The Warren County Sheriff's Dept.**

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