NO PREP

Methamphetamine

Dangers of This Addictive Stimulant

Includes: Student reading, case study, differentiated questions, teacher key

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Name: Period: Date:

Methamphetamine: Dangers of This Addictive Stimulant

What Meth Is and How It's Made

Methamphetamine—commonly referred to as meth—is a powerful stimulant that affects the central nervous system. It can take various forms: powder, crystals ("crystal meth"), or tablets. Unlike many natural drugs, meth is often synthesized in clandestine labs using a combination of over-the-counter medications and toxic chemicals such as battery acid or antifreeze. This makes it particularly dangerous, as impurities and unpredictable potency can cause severe health effects. Teens who experiment with meth might see it as a quick way to boost energy or mood, unaware of the intense risks involved.

Short-Term Euphoria vs. Long-Term Damage

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Short-Term Euphoria vs. Long-Term Damage

When someone ingests meth, they may feel an immediate rush of energy, euphoria, and heightened alertness. This high, however, is typically followed by a "crash" marked by exhaustion, depression, and intense cravings for more. Prolonged use leads to significant changes in the brain's dopamine system, making it hard to feel pleasure from everyday activities. Over time, users may experience "meth mouth," characterized by severe dental decay, and skin sores caused by obsessive picking. Additionally, meth places a tremendous strain on the cardiovascular system, increasing heart rate and blood pressure, which can precipitate strokes or heart attacks even in young people.

Paranoia, Hallucinations, and Psychosis

Meth doesn't just damage the body; it profoundly impacts the mind. Chronic use can lead to paranoia, hallucinations, and erratic behaviors. Some users report feeling like insects are crawling under their skin, a sensation called "formication", leading them to pick at their skin compulsively. Extended binges, where users stay awake for days,

amplify these effects. As teens are still solidifying their coping mechanisms and emotional regulation, meth-induced psychosis can severely disrupt their mental health development, sometimes with lasting repercussions.

Severe Addiction Potential

Meth is known for its high addiction potential. Because it delivers an intense rush, users can quickly become dependent, continually seeking that euphoric state despite escalating negative consequences. Tolerance builds fast, prompting larger or more frequent doses. For teens, this rapid spiral is especially dangerous as it can derail education, relationships, and overall well-being before they're even fully aware of what's happening. Getting addicted to meth can lock young people into a cycle of chasing the drug, neglecting crucial life responsibilities, and engaging in risky or illegal behavior to maintain their supply.

Recovery: Possible but Difficult

Beating a meth addiction is notoriously challenging. Withdrawal symptoms—such as overwhelming fatigue, depression, and intense cravings—can linger for weeks or months. Recovery programs often combine behavioral therapy, support groups, and, in some cases, medication to manage specific symptoms. Early intervention is key. Teens who receive help before meth use becomes entrenched have a better chance of reversing some of the damage. Long-term support from family, friends, and professionals also boosts the odds of maintaining sobriety and rebuilding a healthy, stable life.

Key Information: Key Points Table

Aspect	Impact on Users
Brain Chemistry	Damaged dopamine pathways, leading to depression
Physical Effects	"Meth mouth," skin sores, potential heart failure
Mental Health	Paranoia, hallucinations, psychosis
Withdrawal	Prolonged fatigue, depression, cravings

Case Study Excerpt

Hailey was 16 when she first tried meth at a party. She had been feeling drained by school pressures and sought something to "give her energy." The initial rush was exhilarating: she felt unstoppable, talking a mile a minute and breezing through an all-night cram session. But the crash that followed was brutal—she felt more exhausted than ever, snapping at friends and skipping classes to sleep. Despite the downside, Hailey kept seeking that burst of energy. Within a few weeks, she noticed red sores on her arms from incessant scratching. She became jittery and paranoid, convinced her classmates were talking about her. Her grades plunged, and once-supportive teachers grew concerned about her erratic behavior. When her parents found meth paraphernalia in her backpack, they confronted her. Hailey lashed out, accusing them of invading her privacy. But after an intense argument, she admitted she couldn't get through a day without meth. A counselor referred her to an inpatient treatment program that specialized in adolescent addictions. Leaving the drug behind was tough—she spent days battling mood swings, insomnia, and cravings. However, with therapy, group sessions, and medical oversight, Hailey gradually regained stability. She later credited the early intervention with preventing her from sinking deeper into addiction.

1. Why did Hailey initially try meth, and how did her feelings change over time?

2. What challenges did Hailey face during her early recovery process?

Multiple Choice

1. A short-term effect of meth can include:

    a) Consistent calmness and deep sleep

    b) Lower risk of heart complications

    c) Guaranteed stable mood after use

    d) Quick energy boost and euphoria

2. Meth mouth refers to:

    a) Severe dental problems resulting from poor hygiene and dry mouth

    b) A harmless side effect that disappears immediately after stopping meth

    c) A condition where users develop extremely strong teeth

    d) A medical term for improved saliva production

3. Meth-induced paranoia might cause a user to:

    a) Become overly suspicious of others and experience hallucinations

    b) Ignore any fears or worries

    c) Sleep for long uninterrupted hours and experience deep, peaceful rest

    d) Develop a calm, friendly demeanor

Matching

Write the letter of the correct definition on the line next to each term.

Term	Definition
1. ___ Formication	A) Period of repeated drug use without sleep for days
2. ___ Psychosis	B) Intense feeling of pleasure or excitement
3. ___ Binge	C) Feeling of bugs crawling on or under the skin
4. ___ Euphoria	D) Powerful urges to use again that follow the crash and can linger for weeks or months
5. ___ Cravings	E) Extreme disorder in thinking, often with hallucinations/delusions

Fill-in-the-Blank

1. Meth is a _____ that can rapidly increase heart rate and blood pressure.

2. Chronic meth use can lead to _____, an intense scratching behavior sometimes due to feeling bugs under the skin.

3. _____ from meth may include severe tiredness, mood swings, and a strong desire for more of the drug.

Short Answer

Answer each question in 2-4 complete sentences.

1. How can meth's short-term "rush" trap teens into repeated use?

_____

_____

_____

2. Why might meth users experience paranoia or hallucinations?

3. What are some first steps a teen could take if they realize they are dependent on meth?