

# Drug Fact Sheet

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## Methamphetamine

### Overview

Methamphetamine (meth) is a stimulant. The FDA-approved brand-name medication is Desoxyn®.

### Street names

Batu, Bikers Coffee, Black Beauties, Chalk, Chicken Feed, Crank, Crystal, Glass, Go-Fast, Hiropon, Ice, Meth, Methlies, Quick, Poor Man's Cocaine, Shabu, Shards, Speed, Stove Top, Tina, Trash, Tweak, Uppers, Ventana, Vidrio, Yaba, Yellow Bam



### Looks like

Regular meth is a pill or powder. Crystal meth resembles glass fragments or shiny blue-white "rocks" of various sizes.

### Methods of abuse

Meth is swallowed, snorted, injected, or smoked. To intensify the effects, users may take higher doses of the drug, take it more frequently, or change their method of intake. In some cases, meth abusers go without food and sleep while taking part in a form of binging known as a "run." Meth users on a "run" inject as much as a gram of the drug every 2 to 3 hours over several days until they run out of meth or become too disorganized to continue.

### Affect on mind

Meth is a highly addictive drug with potent central nervous system (CNS) stimulant properties. A brief, intense sensation, or rush, is reported by those who smoke or inject it. Oral ingestion or snorting produces a long-lasting high instead of a rush, which reportedly can continue for as long as half a day. Both the rush and the high are believed to result from the release of very high levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine into areas of the brain that regulate feelings of pleasure. Long-term meth use results in many damaging effects, including addiction. Chronic meth abusers exhibit violent behavior, anxiety, confusion, and insomnia. They also can display a number of psychotic features, including paranoia, aggression, visual and auditory hallucinations, mood disturbances, and delusions. One such delusion is the sensation of insects creeping on or under the skin. The paranoia can result in homicidal as well as suicidal thoughts. Researchers have reported that as much as 50% of the dopamine-producing cells in the brain can be damaged after prolonged exposure to relatively low levels of meth. Researchers also have found that serotonin-containing nerve cells may be damaged even more extensively.

### Affect on body

Taking even small amounts of meth can result in increased wakefulness, increased physical activity, decreased appetite, rapid breathing and heart rate, irregular heartbeat, increased blood pressure, and hyperthermia (overheating). High doses can elevate body temperature to dangerous, sometimes lethal, levels as well as cause convulsions and even cardiovascular collapse and death. Meth abuse may also cause extreme anorexia, memory loss, and severe dental problems.

### Drugs causing similar effects

Cocaine and potent stimulant pharmaceuticals, such as amphetamines and methylphenidate, produce similar effects.

### **Overdose effects**

As noted, high doses may result in death from stroke, heart attack or multiple organ problems caused by overheating.

### **Legal status in the United States**

Meth is a Schedule II stimulant, which means that it has a high potential for abuse and limited medical uses. It is available only through a prescription that cannot be refilled. In the 1960s, meth pharmaceutical products were widely available and extensively diverted from medical use and abused. Meth was used in nasal decongestants and bronchial inhalers. Later it was available in tablets and injectable formulations and used for weight control, treating depression, and to increase alertness and prevent sleep. A broad segment of society from housewives to truckers to military personnel used meth products for their stimulant effects. In 1971, the U.S. government placed meth into Schedule II of the Controlled Substance Act and removed meth injectable formulations from the U.S. market. Combined with a better understanding of its high abuse potential, this led to a drastic reduction in meth abuse. However, meth abuse rose again in the 1980s, and it is currently considered a major drug of abuse. Today there is only one legal meth product, Desoxyn®. It is currently marketed in 5-milligram tablets. Desoxyn® has very limited use in the treatment of obesity and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

### **Common places of origin**

Mexican drug trafficking organizations have become the primary manufacturers and distributors of methamphetamine to cities throughout the United States, including in Hawaii. Domestic clandestine laboratory operators also produce and distribute meth but usually on a smaller scale. The methods used depend on the availability of precursor chemicals. Currently, meth is mainly made with diverted products that contain pseudoephedrine. The Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act of 2005 requires retailers of non-prescription products containing pseudoephedrine, ephedrine, and phenylpropanolamine to place these products behind the counter or in a locked cabinet. Consumers must show identification and sign a logbook for each purchase.

