

# Manitoba Addictions Awareness Week



## Facts on "METH"...Do You Know?

### **What is it?**

- Methamphetamine (Meth) belongs to a family of drugs called amphetamines - powerful stimulants that speed up the body's central nervous system.
- It was used in the 1930's as a nasal decongestant, and is still medically available in the U.S. as a treatment for obesity. However, its severe effects and highly addictive nature limit its medical usefulness.
- Meth is not legally available in Canada and most of it is made in illegal labs.
- Jibb is a slang term used for Meth. The powdered form is commonly referred to as speed, meth or chalk and the crystal form as **crystal meth, ice or glass**.

### **Where does it come from?**

- Meth made in illegal labs is produced using fairly inexpensive, and often toxic or flammable ingredients.
- It is made by modifying ephedrine and pseudo-ephedrine (i.e. cold medications), chemicals (i.e. Sulfuric Acid, Toluene) are added to facilitate and accelerate this process.
- The chemicals and processes can vary and this affects the strength, purity and effects of the drug.

### **What is the environmental impact?**

- Methamphetamines are often produced using toxic household chemicals and solvents.
- Every pound of Meth produced equals 5-6 pounds of toxic waste.
- Due to the illegal nature of these labs this toxic waste is disposed of in ways that are extremely damaging to the environment and community (dumped in fields and rivers, buried, poured down wells, etc.).
- The "cooking" process is so damaging to homes and buildings that they are uninhabitable afterwards.

### **What does it look like?**

- Methamphetamine can be a white, odourless, bitter-tasting crystalline powder that dissolves easily in water or alcohol and may be snorted, swallowed, smoked or injected.
- In its smokable form, it is called "ice", "crystal" or "glass" because of its transparent, sheet-like crystals. It is smoked in a pipe like crack cocaine.
- Variations in ingredients used and method of manufacture can actually result in different colours.

### **Who is using it?**

- The low cost and easy manufacture of methamphetamine has led to a rise in use among a variety of people.
- Users include: young people at raves, raves and nightclubs; cocaine users who substitute methamphetamine for its cocaine-like effects.
- Females are at greater risk as they are 30-40% more likely to be using Meth than males.

### **How does it make you feel?**

- **The way Methamphetamine or any other drug affects you depends on many factors, including:**
  - Age and body weight,
  - Quantity taken,
  - Frequency, as well as longevity of use,
  - Method of use,
  - Pre-existing medical or psychiatric conditions,
  - Use of alcohol and other drugs at the same time, including illegal drugs as well as prescription, over-the-counter or herbal substances.
- **Method of consumption:**
  - Smoking or injection produces an intense surge of euphoria called a "rush" or a "flash".
  - Snorting produces effects within 3-5 minutes, swallowing within 15-20 minutes.
- **Effects include:**
  - Alertness, high energy level, talkativeness, confidence,
  - Little need for food or sleep,

- Racing heart and chest pain,
- Increased blood pressure and body temperature,
- Dryness of mouth, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea,
- Physical tension, feeling "wired", restless, uncontrolled/repetitive movement, irritable,
- Extreme and alarming effects can include: paranoid delusions, hallucinations, aggressive behaviour and impulsive violence.

#### ***How long does the feeling last and what are the after effects of using it?***

- Injected: effects may last 6 - 8 hours
- Smoked: effects may last 10-12 hours
- After effects: users are left feeling tired and depressed.

#### ***Is it Addictive? Methamphetamine is Highly Addictive.***

- Continuous use over a period of days or weeks, in a "binge and crash" pattern, invites serious health risks including drug dependency.
- Tolerance to Methamphetamine builds quickly, meaning users need more and more of the drug to feel the same effects.
- Withdrawal: when dependent users stop taking the drug they experience:
  - Intense craving for the drug
  - Headaches, shortness of breath
  - Hunger, stomach pain,
  - Convulsions,
  - Tiredness and depression,
  - Cognitive impairments: impulse control, verbal memory, decision-making and learning.

#### ***Is it dangerous? YES!!***

- Dosage is difficult to judge because the content of the drug sold varies widely. Methamphetamine causes the heart to beat fast and blood pressure to rise and on overdose can result in seizures, high body temperature, irregular heartbeat, heart attack, stroke and death.
- Risk of overdose is highest when the drug is injected.

#### ***What are the long-term effects of using it?***

- skin problems,
- malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies, weight loss,
- speech and thought disturbances,
- depression, sleeping problems,
- damage to heart, lungs, liver, kidneys and nerve cells,
- Amphetamine psychosis, symptoms of this include: hallucinations, delusions, paranoia and bizarre and violent behaviour.

#### ***What does the law say?***

- **ILLICIT DRUG; illegal to make, sell and use.**

#### ***Other Risks:***

- Many people who inject methamphetamines are at risk for problems resulting from used/dirty needles including infections, HIV, AIDS and hepatitis.
- High doses can cause seizures and heart attacks.
- Methamphetamine use can cause irreversible damage to blood vessels in the brain which may produce strokes.
- Methamphetamines are dangerous to use during pregnancy or in combination with other stimulant drugs.
- It is worth noting that 1 in 5 illegal labs that the police "bust" have children present and therefore exposed to toxins cooking as well as to other risks associated with illegal drug production/trade.

#### ***More Information:***

- Health Canada Fact Sheet on Crystal Meth - [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/media/releases/2005/2005\\_58bk1.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/media/releases/2005/2005_58bk1.html)

REMEMBER: A person's experience with any drug can vary. There are a number of things that have an impact on person's experience with a drug including but not limited to: the amount and the strength of the drug consumed, the setting in which the drug is used, a person's mood/expectations prior to using the drug as well as the person's past experience with that drug.

