

Oral Health facts



Photographs reproduced with permission of Stephen Wagner, DDS

Methamphetamine Use and Oral Health

Methamphetamine is an addictive street drug also known as “meth,” “speed,” “ice,” “chalk,” “crank,” “fire,” “glass” and “crystal.”

Users quickly become addicted and have to use the drug more often and in larger amounts.

Methamphetamine addiction causes high blood pressure, along with heart, liver, kidney and brain damage. It also causes the user to be irritable, confused, anxious, paranoid and aggressive.

Rampant tooth decay called “meth mouth” is another common side effect.

Heavy methamphetamine users look underfed or malnourished because the drug acts as an appetite suppressant.

Parents and non-dental health professionals should be concerned if they notice family members, especially teenagers and young adults, who have unexplained tooth decay that happens over a short period of time.

Tooth decay or “meth mouth” is caused by methamphetamine use because:

- The acid produced from inhaling the drug weakens the tooth enamel.
- It causes the mouth to dry out, reducing the amount of protective saliva around the teeth.
- It makes the user crave high-calorie, carbonated drinks and snacks.
- Users tend to grind and clench their teeth causing the tooth enamel to break down and;
- The drug works for 12 hours which leads to long periods when users are not likely to brush their teeth.

For more information visit:

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration www.samhsa.gov

The National Institute for Drug Abuse
www.nida.nih.gov/Infofacts/methamphetamine.html



Ohio Department of Health
Oral Health Section

246 North High Street • Columbus, Ohio 43215

614-466-4180 • www.odh.ohio.gov/odhPrograms/ohs/oral/oral1.aspx