

CRYSTAL METH: COLLEGE'S HIDDEN DRUG EPIDEMIC

Written by Loree Taylor Jordan

America has a hidden drug epidemic which involves its own home-grown version of one drug. It is called methamphetamine, and it goes by a lot of street names, including crank, ice, crystal, glass, chalk, etc. Whatever you call it, meth is on a silent march to destroy lives. According to www.msnbc.com (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3071772/>), more than a million Americans used meth in 1999, more than used crack or heroin.

Its appeal is extreme energy, which puts college students at particular risk. Keeping up with requirements is a challenge for many college students, and the pursuit of wakefulness can lead students down the road of no return. Substance abuse is a way to trick the body into doing what needs to be done. But with crystal meth, 9 out of 10 people who inject it just once become addicted. It is one of the most difficult addictions to beat.

This is not a new drug, but an old drug in new form. Methamphetamine is a super-charged version of amphetamine, which is a prescription drug. Amphetamine was first marketed in the 1930s under the name Benzedrine as an inhaler to treat nasal congestion. It was eventually marketed in pill form to treat narcolepsy and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). As time went on, amphetamine abuse became more and more frequent. Amphetamines began being used as a cure-all for people who needed to stay awake. It was also used for weight loss, for helping athletes perform better and longer and for treating mild depression. By 1965, the FDA implemented tighter controls on amphetamines in an effort to control abuse. Many amphetamine products were removed from the market.

Controls placed on amphetamines resulted in a dramatic growth in production of methamphetamines. Methamphetamine comes in clear crystal or powder and dissolves easily in water or alcohol. It can be taken orally, injected, snorted or smoked.

Crystal meth is the synthetic white crystalline powder form of amphetamines. It is typically manufactured in illegal labs using readily available materials such as battery acid, antifreeze and drain cleaner. The fact that it is so easy and inexpensive to make using common materials adds to its appeal. Meth labs are found in trailer parks, apartment buildings, motel rooms, abandoned cars and campgrounds. A lasting high is achieved with small quantities and it has been called "the poor man's cocaine."

In low doses, it heightens the senses and makes users more alert. Users quickly reach a level of tolerance with this drug, and require more and more for the same effect. As doses increase, so does exhilaration and euphoria. But high doses also lead to increased heart rate. Body temperature may rise to dangerous levels. Users may have seizures or accumulate fluid in their lungs, brain tissue and skull. Smoking and inhaling meth damages the lungs and nasal passages; injecting the drug puts the user at risk for HIV or Hepatitis C.

How can you tell if someone is using meth?

Signs of meth use are similar to other drugs which stimulate the central nervous system. They include the following:

- Inability to sleep, often for days on end
- Extremely alert and energized, even after being up all night
- Decreased appetite, may become dangerously thin
- Irritability, extreme nervousness, tremors
- Lack of interest in maintaining personal appearance
- Loss of interest in school or extracurricular activities

- Wild mood swings, hostility, paranoia
- Hallucinations or delusions, particularly of insects under the skin leading to excessive scratching
- Burns, nosebleeds or track marks
- Evidence of inhaling or injecting paraphernalia such as straws, spoons, razor blades, mirrors, syringes or surgical tubing

If someone you love is having a problem with meth, encourage them to get help immediately. The nature of addiction is that the addict will be compelled to continue using. First and foremost, take care of yourself. Align yourself with a support group, such as Alanon.

If you are having a problem with meth, seek help immediately. The dangers of this drug can't be overemphasized. Increased heart rate can lead to heart attack, liver or kidney failure or stroke. If you think this drug won't destroy your life, think again. To see the toll meth takes, visit <http://www.drugfree.org/Portal/DrugIssue/MethResources/faces/index.html> to see the faces of meth. For real stories about the impact meth has had on people, visit <http://www.drugfree.org/Portal/DrugIssue/Meth/stories.html>.

For further information visit the following sites:

- Office of National Drug Control Policy at <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/index.html>
- The Partnership for a Drug-Free America at <http://www.drugfree.org/>
- Narcotics Anonymous at <http://www.na.org>.

About Loree Taylor Jordan



A recovering food addict herself, Loree's mission is clear: to help others recognize, understand and heal from unhealthy addictions as she has in her own life. Loree, was personally sought out by famed self-help guru Tony Robbins to be a guest speaker at his international Life Mastery Program.

She is the author of several books and her new book is entitled I Never Thought Addiction Could Happen to Me-The 3 Secret Addictions that are Shattering the Lives of College Students-and What to Do About It!