

THE ADDICTION THAT WON'T LET GO: CRYSTAL METH

Written by Loree Taylor Jordan

Use of methamphetamines among teens is rising. Known as "poor man's cocaine", meth is cheaper to produce than cocaine and produces a high that can last up to eight hours. 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. Hazelden Foundation in Minnesota reported in 2005 that a fifth of addicts who entered drug treatment for meth were under the age of 18. Meth is so addictive that less than 6% of those who enter treatment for 28 days or less stay clean. Addicts often end up institutionalized, dead or on the streets.

Why do teens use meth? Some teenage girls are admitting to using meth as a way to lose weight. Teens struggling with low self-esteem are vulnerable to mood-altering chemicals. Many teens experiment with drugs in an effort to fit in.

Meth releases high levels of dopamine into the brain, which creates a sense of ecstasy and being in control. This sense of well-being is an illusion. When you use meth, you are really putting yourself in the hands of a substance that may very well have life-long consequences. It is one of the most difficult addictions to beat.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) reports that in 2006, 1.9 million Americans age 12 and older had used meth. The 2007 Monitoring the Future study revealed that 1.1% of eighth graders, 1.6% of tenth graders and 1.7% of twelfth graders had abused meth at least once in the prior year.

Meth is so addictive that many first-time users immediately become addicts. Users quickly reach a level of tolerance with this drug, and require more and more for the same effect. Higher doses lead to increased risk for physical dangers, such as increased heart rate, dangerously increased body temperature and even seizures. Fluid may accumulate in 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.

Methamphetamines are a powerful form of amphetamines that come in clear crystal or powder and easily dissolve in water or alcohol. Crystal meth 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.

Signs of meth use 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. Make sure you take care of yourself. There are many support groups available for people who love addicts, 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!