

Common Ingredients in Meth Manufacturing

The common ingredients used in making methamphetamine and listed below are very acidic:

- Antifreeze
- Battery acid
- Drain cleaner
- Hydrochloric acid
- Lantern fuel
- Lye
- Muriatic acid
- Paint thinner
- Red phosphorus found in the strips on match boxes
- Over-the-counter cold medicines that contain ephedrine

Mix these together and you have some caustic stuff. Meth users can go from having healthy teeth and a sparkling smile to losing their teeth in a very short time period. For most, dentures are the only option.

These dangerous chemicals can also make you feel like there are bugs under your skin, causing you to scratch yourself to the point that you have bleeding sores on your face, arms and legs.



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photo: Judith Allen, DMD



Your Mouth on Meth

What You Need to Know

Meth, Speed, Ice, Chalk, Crank, Fire, Glass and Crystal are street names for the drug methamphetamine. Others will tell you that meth will make you feel good. It's pretty cheap and readily available, even though it is illegal.

Methamphetamine is a stimulant, a type of drug that speeds up your brain and pumps up your heart rate and breathing. Meth users can snort, swallow, inject, smoke or use the drug as a suppository. *Tempted to get high?*

What Meth Does

- Meth gives the user an intense high and is highly addictive; many who want to quit, can't. After just one hit of meth, you're in a downward spiral that's hard to pull out of.
- It rapidly becomes used more often and in larger amounts.
- Meth can cause difficulty breathing, an irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure and lung failure.
- Meth hijacks your brain. It changes your brain's chemistry and can cause permanent brain damage.
- Taking meth may make you irritable, confused, anxious, paranoid and aggressive.
- Meth decreases your appetite, leading to malnutrition and extreme weight loss.
- Using meth can make you shaky, dizzy, unable to sleep and cause hallucinations, seizures—uncontrollable jerking body movements—and even death.

One Big Problem

While methamphetamine is very damaging to the body and brain, it also destroys teeth. An unhealthy, unattractive mouth makes it difficult to feel good about your appearance, socialize and find a job.

Meth Mouth

Meth user's teeth become blackened, stained, rotted and crumble or fall apart at the gum line. That's why meth damaged teeth often cannot be saved and must be extracted or removed, *even among young or short-term users.*

The large amount of tooth decay is due to meth's acid nature and the fact that it causes dry mouth, which eliminates the mouth's protective saliva. Users crave sugary soda and grind or clench their teeth. The focus on getting high causes users to stop taking care of themselves, including not brushing their teeth.



What You Can Do

- Do not use methamphetamine or other drugs.
- If you're already using, call the agency below for help getting off drugs.
- Instead of drinking sodas, drink plenty of water.
- Be concerned if you notice family members or friends, especially teens and young adults, who have unexplained and rapid tooth decay.
- Ask them about it and help them get treatment. Call the agency listed below.
- Brush and floss your teeth daily.
- Ask a health care provider about how to get dental care. Many health care for the homeless agencies provide dental care or help homeless people get dental care.
- Try to see a dentist at least once a year.

Sources

- American Dental Association
- Denver Health Community Voices
- KidsHealth®, The Nemours Foundation
- National Institute on Drug Abuse
- National Survey on Drug Use & Health (2004)
- HCH Clinicians' Network Oral Health Task Force

Your Agency Name Here

Your agency address, phone and other contact information here