

## METH MOUTH

### What is Meth?

Methamphetamine is a cheap, easy-to-make illicit drug. It's known by several street names: Meth, Speed, Ice, Chalk, Crank, Fire, Glass, and Crystal. It is highly addictive and its use is on the rise in the U.S. even though it produces devastating effects on users' health.

### What does it do to you?

Methamphetamine is a potent central nervous system stimulant that can cause shortness of breath, hyperthermia, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure, permanent brain damage and rampant tooth decay. Some users describe their teeth as "blackened, stained, rotting, crumbling or falling apart."

### How does it hurt my teeth?

The extensive tooth decay is probably caused by a combination of drug-induced psychological and physiological changes resulting in dry mouth and long periods of poor oral hygiene. Some reports have speculated that the acidity of the drug also damages teeth. A methamphetamine "high" lasts much longer than that produced by crack cocaine (12 hours versus one hour for cocaine). This can lead to long periods of poor oral hygiene. And while they are high, users often crave high-calorie, carbonated, sugary beverages or they may grind or clench their teeth, all of which can harm teeth.

**Why is this important?** Dentists are seeing more instances of rampant tooth decay caused by the use of methamphetamines. This condition, known as meth mouth, develops rapidly and is attributable to many causes, including the drug's effect of drying the mouth, the tendency of users to grind their teeth and a drug-induced craving for sugary drinks. Often, tooth damage is so severe that extraction is the only viable option.

More often  
than not,  
meth users'  
teeth cannot  
be salvaged  
and must be  
extracted.

