

**METH  
DESTROYS**

# WHAT IS METH?

## What is meth?

**When it comes to illegal drugs, some are worse than others. However, no drug has a more devastating impact on the minds and bodies of those who abuse it than methamphetamine.**

But meth doesn't stop there – it destroys families, harms the environment, increases crime and rips apart the fabric of a community. And the production and abuse of this exceptionally addictive drug has spread like wildfire across Tennessee, first in the state's rural areas and now increasingly into suburbs and cities.

The most effective way to fight this growing problem is with facts. The facts about meth speak for themselves. There is no need to exaggerate. **Meth Destroys.**

## Q&A

### What is meth?

Methamphetamine is a powerfully addictive stimulant that is made by "cooking" ingredients that include products containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine and a variety of toxic, explosive products.

### What are some other names for meth?

On the street, meth is also known as Speed, Crank, Chalk, Fire, Glass, Ice, Tweak and Yaba. Whatever it's called, none of the names do justice to what it really does to people's minds, bodies and spirits.



### What does meth look like?

It can be a powder or rock-like chunks that are white, yellow or even darker colors such as brown or red. Some types of meth are clear, like glass or ice. Meth can come in pill form, too, and is sometimes mistaken for ecstasy, another illegal, synthetic drug.

### How is meth used?

It can be smoked, snorted, eaten or injected into the blood stream.

### Is using meth dangerous?

One of the biggest dangers of meth is how quickly people can become addicted to it. Many addicts say they were hooked after using it for the first time.

## RECIPE FOR DISASTER

Would you drink drain cleaner, engine starter fluid, hydrogen peroxide or battery acid? Of course not. But meth users are putting most or all of these chemicals in their bodies.

Making meth can be as dangerous as using it. The ingredients are a hazardous combination of poisonous and flammable chemicals which are heated on a stove or hot plate. A slight miscalculation with ingredients or cooking temperature, and meth becomes a deadly bomb.

Meth labs can be located just about anywhere – inside homes, barns, garages, motel rooms, and even vehicles.

■ More than 12.3 million Americans age 12 and older (approximately 5.2 percent of the population) have tried methamphetamine, and 1.4 million used it in 2004.

– National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2005

# Meth Destroys THE BODY

**Meth use is not something that can be hidden. It destroys the body, inside and out.**

Brain damage lasts for years, even after the user has stopped. Other side effects are anxiety, paranoia, increased aggression and irritability, dizziness, hallucinations, seizures and memory loss.

Gums turn black and teeth rot.

Increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

Skin becomes dry and gray. Many users experience the sensation of bugs crawling under their skin. The toxic chemicals cause a terrible body odor.

Liver, intestine and stomach can bleed internally.

Loss of appetite, resulting in extreme weight loss and malnutrition.

Loss of weight and muscle tissue may cause kidneys to fail. Transplant may become necessary.

Bones become brittle and break more easily.



■ After two years on meth, users have depleted 25 percent, or 40 years' worth, of dopamine, the chemical needed to feel happiness and enjoyment. The average adult loses only 7 percent every 10 years.

– National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2002

# METH DESTROYS FAMILIES

The impact of meth goes far beyond just the people who use and make it. A habitual meth user becomes irritable, paranoid and often violent. Usually, the first to pay the price is the addict's family, especially the children.



Nashville child who spent two years away from home because of his mother's meth addiction. He is now back at home, and his mother has been clean for a year and a half.

**"IT MAKES YOU SO COLD  
AND RUTHLESS. I LOVE MY  
CHILDREN WITH ALL MY  
HEART, BUT AT THE TIME  
I NEVER THOUGHT  
ABOUT THEM."**

– Recovering addict, Putnam County, TN

In recent years, hundreds of children in Tennessee have seen meth's destruction up close.

Abuse and unimaginable neglect are common, and the physical health of children who live in homes where meth is made is especially at risk. They breathe the toxic fumes created by making meth, causing respiratory problems. They touch the residue that seeps into walls and floors, causing skin irritation and even burns. They are often within reach of flammable chemicals and needles.



**"I HAVE RUN INTO SITUATIONS  
WHERE YOUNG CHILDREN HAVE  
BEEN ABLE TO DESCRIBE TO ME  
HOW TO MAKE METHAMPHETAMINE."**

– Betsy Dunn, Tennessee Department  
of Children's Services

■ 40 percent of child welfare officials surveyed report that methamphetamine has led to an increase in the number of children removed from homes.

– National Association of Counties 2005 survey  
polling 500 sheriffs' departments in 45 states

■ In 2004, law enforcement authorities seized 1,574 meth labs in Tennessee, second only to Missouri across the United States.

– Drug Enforcement Administration

# Meth Destroys COMMUNITIES

**Meth hurts not only the person making, using or selling it.  
It hurts the entire community.**

## Environment

Making meth can produce pounds of toxic waste. Cooks often pour leftover chemicals and byproducts down drains or onto the ground. The chemicals can be present in soil and groundwater for years, posing long-term hazards.

The houses, trailers, barns, and other buildings where meth is made must be thoroughly cleaned before they can safely be used again. The removal and handling of evidence and hazardous waste can cost thousands of dollars. In some instances, a meth lab can cause such serious contamination that the structure where the lab was found must be demolished.

## Economy

There are hidden costs associated with meth, affecting health care, property and the workplace. Hospitals



Photo provided by the Tennessee National Guard

are often forced to cover expensive treatments for meth lab burn victims. In fact, the Vanderbilt University Medical Center Burn Unit provides uncompensated care to meth lab victims at a rate of \$5 million to \$10 million annually.

The buildings where meth labs are seized can be quarantined for a number of months by law enforcement officials until deemed livable by cleanup officials. Workers on meth often miss work, driving down productivity.

## Law enforcement

It is expensive and time-consuming to certify a law enforcement officer to safely seize a meth lab. The health of those officers must be closely monitored because of their presence at lab sites. Equipment used in meth investigations is costly, and much of it must be destroyed after each use because of contamination.

Meth's impact on the criminal justice system is huge. Increasing amounts of taxpayer money are needed to house, feed and medicate inmates incarcerated for meth crimes. In one Tennessee county, between \$5,000 and \$7,000 is spent monthly on medications for inmates, three-fourths of whom have been arrested on meth-related charges.

■ Trauma patients who are meth users are more likely to have longer stays in the hospital, and the medical bills they incur are likely to be \$4,000 higher than the general population.

— The Journal of the American Medical Association

# WHAT CAN WE DO?

## Join Tennessee's **FIGHT AGAINST METH**

In 2004, Gov. Phil Bredesen formed a task force with one mission – to fight meth. Today, certain types of cold medicines containing the main ingredient in meth – pseudoephedrine – are available only behind the pharmacy counter in Tennessee. It's helping, but the problem has not gone away. Drug cartels are shipping meth into the state, and there are still people in Tennessee making the drug in home and mobile labs.

Meth is a prevalent problem in Tennessee. You can do your part by talking to your children about the horrible effects of meth. Help your community by being on the lookout for meth labs or for those selling the drug. If you know someone using meth, get help for them. Together with Gov. Bredesen and your district attorney, you can help make Tennessee meth-free.

### **NEED HELP?**

If you suspect someone is making or selling meth, you can report the person by calling the **Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI)** at **(877) TNN-METH**.

If you or someone you know needs help with a meth addiction, call the **Tennessee Association of Alcohol, Drug and Other Addiction Services (TAADAS) REDLINE** at **(800) 889-9789**.



### **Join the Anti-Meth Task Force.**

Visit **[www.MethFreeTn.org](http://www.MethFreeTn.org)** for more information about meth in Tennessee and to get involved in the fight against this terrible drug.

# **Partners In the Fight**

**Organizations such as the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation, Tennessee Bankers Association, Tennessee Hospital Association and Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry are partnering with the Meth Destroys campaign to further educate Tennesseans about the dangers of meth.**

**For a complete list of partners and to find out how to become a partner, please visit [www.MethFreeTn.org](http://www.MethFreeTn.org).**

**The information in this brochure is brought to you by Gov. Bredesen and your District Attorney.**