

# METHAMPHETAMINE/AMPHETAMINE: A NEW LESSON ON AN OLD DRUG

As the capitol of California, Sacramento has long been proud of its important position within the United States. Sadly, however, it has also been noted as the leader of a very disturbing trend. In 1995, Sacramento documented more methamphetamine-related deaths than any other county in California. Additionally, the amount of methamphetamine seized and the number of drug-related arrests currently exceeds the totals for heroin and cocaine combined. With so many different types of drugs on the streets these days, it's not surprising that many Americans don't even know what methamphetamine is or some of the horrifying affects it has on its users.

Amphetamines were discovered in the late 1920s by George Atlas, who was researching ways to treat patients suffering from depression in mental institutions. His findings indicated that patients who began using this newfound stimulant lost their appetites. This effect proved to have a large consumer market value, as amphetamines later became the main ingredient in diet pills.

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### Many Shapes, Sizes and Colors to Choose From

Like most drugs, amphetamines are found in many physical forms such as



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**The most popular method of manufacturing "meth" entails mixing dangerous chemicals such as red phosphorous, hydriotic acid and ephedrine. The vapors from these chemicals are toxic and can even be fatal.**

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capsules, tablets, crystals, and liquids. Capsules and tablets, which are swallowed, were quite popular in the '60s and '70s, while the crystals (mostly white, off-white, tan, or brown) are water-soluble and, like their liquid counterpart, are usually injected. Comparable to cocaine, the crystal form is also often sniffed into the nostrils. Amphetamines also serve as the parent to several derivatives. Methedrine, for example, is a very strong form of amphetamine. Commonly referred to as methamphetamine, methedrine is also known on the streets as "meth," "crank," and "speed." Benzedrine and dexedrine are other forms of this drug. All variations can be found in the aforementioned physical forms, and their effects are similar to other stimulants. In fact, "crank" is often referred to as the "poor man's cocaine," due to

its high availability from being manufactured in the United States. Note: do not confuse the slang term "crank" (methamphetamine) with "crack" (rock cocaine), although both have like effects.

### Amphetamine Use = Body Abuse

The physical effects of the amphetamine drugs are easily detectable, often causing excitement, talkativeness, trembling, insomnia, and dilated pupils. They may also cause hallucinations and, as previously mentioned, loss of appetite is also a

main result of amphetamine usage. Methamphetamines are more potent, however, and can cause dry mouth, confusion, aggressiveness, nervousness, and the feeling that time passes quickly. Other symptoms include impotence, rapid heartbeat, headaches, nausea, and blurred or double vision. If used for a long period of time, methamphetamines may cause depression and, ultimately, collapse.



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**Usually manufactured in clandestine illegal labs across the country, methamphetamine is laid out to dry so that the liquid has ample time to evaporate.**

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Other dangerous side effects of methamphetamines are an increased feeling of power and high levels of general pleasure, which create the desire for repeated use of these drugs. Stimulating the central nervous system, amphetamines have a very high potential for creating psychological dependence on the user, resulting in grave impairment of judgment, paranoia, and interruptions of normal patterns of eating and sleeping, which, in turn, will produce rapid physical deterioration. Ongoing usage can also sometimes lead to psychotic behavior, which is often confused with true paranoid schizophrenia, as well as severe depression and even suicide.

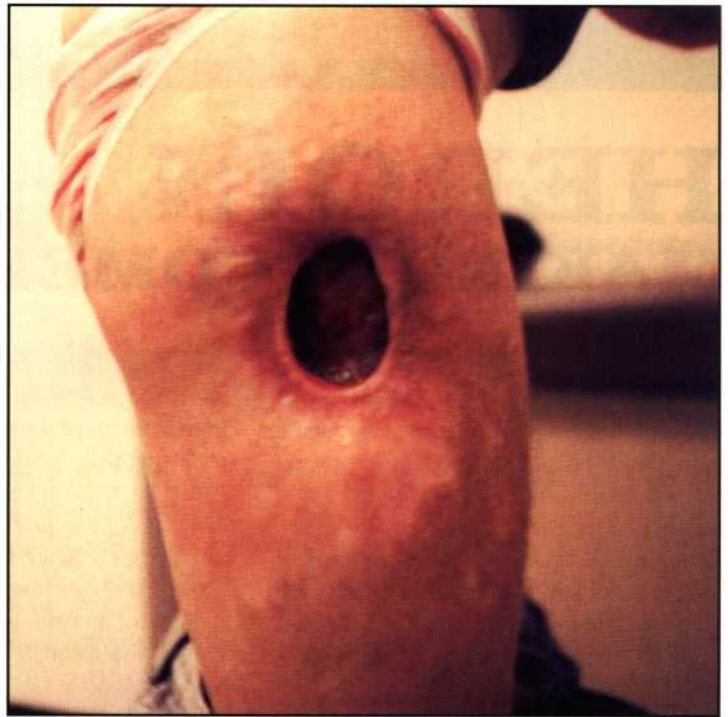
## A Dangerous and Expensive Manufacturing Process

For the past two decades, law enforcement has found it difficult to control the sale and distribution of the chemicals used to make "meth." The most popular

method of manufacture today utilizes red phosphorous, hydriotic acid and ephedrine. Each of these chemicals has recently been controlled, which has forced a move toward the use of pseudoephedrine (commonly found in over-the-counter cold remedies), although this chemical is also on the verge of tighter control. The formulas or "recipes" for making or "cooking" crank are well known and dangerously

accessible to countless people (especially today's computer-literate youngsters) through the internet.

During the '60s and '70s, manufacturing methamphetamine was the exclusive occupation of outlaw "biker" groups. Today, highly sophisticated Mexican smuggling groups have dominated the scene, using clandestine illegal laboratories across the country. The dangers and costs associated with these labs are enormous. Because the process entails mixing chemicals, explosions and fires are very common. The vapors and fumes produced during the manufacturing process can be toxic and, in some cases, fatal. Additionally, for every pound of methamphetamine produced, there is an estimated five to six pounds of chemical waste, which is usually illegally dumped and eventually contaminates land, homes, water systems, crops and livestock. In 1995, more than 500 "meth" labs were seized in California, each costing thousands of dollars for hazardous chemical removal and storage.



Among the common and gruesome side effects of injecting drugs into the same location are skin abscesses. These can also be contracted by using dirty syringes.

Methamphetamine has clearly become the drug of choice in Sacramento. The demand has continuously exceeded its supply, making law enforcement officers increasingly aware of the need to crack down on "crank," "meth," and other forms of this dangerous drug. ★

### Physical Effects of Amphetamine Use:

- excitement
- talkativeness
- trembling
- insomnia
- dilated pupils
- loss of appetite
- weight loss
- dry mouth
- confusion
- aggressiveness
- nervousness
- impotence
- rapid heartbeat
- headaches
- nausea
- blurred or double vision.
- grave impairment of judgment
- paranoia



This drug user displays abscesses on his hands and arms, which are common injection sites due to the easy accessibility of veins found there.