

# Methamphetamine

## Florida Office of Drug Control

### How to Help a Friend

#### Meth Addiction Signs and Symptoms

How can you tell if a friend is using meth? It may not be easy to tell, but there are signs.

Symptoms of methamphetamine use may include:

- Inability to sleep
- Increased sensitivity to noise
- Nervous physical activity, like scratching
- Irritability, dizziness, or confusion
- Extreme anorexia
- Tremors or even convulsions
- Increased heart rate, blood pressure, and risk of stroke
- Presence of inhaling paraphernalia, such as razor blades, mirrors, and straws
- Presence of injecting paraphernalia, such as syringes, heated spoons, or surgical tubing

#### Effective Treatment for Meth Abusers

At this time, the most effective treatments for methamphetamine addiction are behavioral therapies such as cognitive behavioral and contingency management interventions. For example, the Matrix Model, a comprehensive behavioral treatment approach that combines behavioral therapy, family education, individual counseling, 12-Step support, drug testing, and encouragement for non drug-related activities, has been shown to be effective in reducing methamphetamine abuse.

The Matrix Model provides a framework for engaging stimulant abusers in treatment and helping them achieve abstinence. Patients learn about issues critical to addiction and relapse, receive direction and support from a trained therapist, become familiar with self-help programs, and are monitored for drug use by urine testing. The program includes education for family members affected by the addiction.

The therapist functions simultaneously as teacher and coach, fostering a positive, encouraging relationship with the patient and using that relationship to reinforce positive behavior change. The interaction between the therapist and the patient is realistic and direct but not confrontational or parental. Therapists are trained to conduct treatment sessions in a way that promotes the patient's self-esteem, dignity, and self-worth. A positive relationship between patient and therapist is a critical element for patient retention.

Treatment materials draw heavily on other tested treatment approaches. Thus, this approach includes elements pertaining to the areas of relapse prevention, family and group therapies, drug education, and self-help participation. Detailed treatment manuals contain work sheets for individual sessions; other components include family educational groups, early recovery skills groups, relapse prevention groups, conjoint sessions, urine tests, 12-step programs, relapse analysis, and social support groups.

A number of projects have demonstrated that participants treated with the Matrix Model demonstrate statistically significant reductions in drug and alcohol use, improvements in psychological indicators, and reduced risky sexual behaviors associated with

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HIV transmission. These reports, along with evidence suggesting comparable treatment response for methamphetamine users and cocaine users and demonstrated efficacy in enhancing naltrexone treatment of opiate addicts, provide a body of empirical support for the use of the model.

There are currently no specific medications that counteract the effects of methamphetamine or that prolong abstinence from and reduce the abuse of methamphetamine by an individual addicted to the drug. However, there are a number of medications that are FDA-approved for other illnesses that might also be useful in treating methamphetamine addiction. Recent study findings reveal that bupropion, the anti-depressant marketed as Wellbutrin, reduced the methamphetamine-induced “high” as well as drug cravings elicited by drug-related cues. This medication and others are currently in clinical trials, while new compounds are being developed and studied in preclinical models.

Be a real friend. You might even save a life. Encourage your friend to stop or seek professional help. Please call 1-800-662-HELP(4357) for information on hotlines, counseling services, or treatment options in your state. This is the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment’s National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Service. Drug treatment programs by state also may be found online at [www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov).

## References:

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*Rawson, R.; Shoptaw, S.; Obert, J.L.; McCann, M.; Hasson, A.; Marinelli-Casey, P.; Brethen, P.; and Ling, W. An intensive outpatient approach for cocaine abuse: The Matrix model. Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment 12(2): 117-127, 1995.*



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