

When Parents Use Meth: A child's view

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Child who frequently awoke at night said she thought “somebody’s going to shoot me or somebody’s after me. Every time I look out the window, I think I see somebody.”

Child of meth-abusing parent

Ostler, 2007

Outline

- Meth facts
- Effects on the adult caregiver
- Prenatal exposure
- Meth use and maltreatment
- Meth labs and children
- Evaluation of children from labs
- Long-term outcome

Meth Facts

- Stimulant
- Effects longer-lasting than cocaine
- Easy to make
- Very efficient distribution to brain
- Half-life is 10-20 hours
- “Ice”

Meth Facts



Form of drug	Intravenous	Smoked	Snorted	Ingested
Time to effect	15-30 sec	Immediate	3-5 min	15-20 min
Peak concentration	30 min	2 hr	2-3 hr	2-4 hr

Acute Effects of Meth on Caretaker

- Euphoria
- Agitation
- Aggression
- Anxious and volatile behavior
- Psychosis, hallucinations
- Hypersexual behavior
- Compulsive behaviors



“I was always afraid to go over to my neighbors’ because I thought that if I did, [mother’s paramour] was going to hunt me down and come get me.”

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More Acute Effects

- Very high body temperatures
- High blood pressure, rapid heart rate
- Seizures
- Heart attack, stroke
- Abnormal heart rhythm



Chronic Effects

- “Meth mouth”
- Needle marks
- Burns
- Ulcers, sores



'Binge' and 'Crash'



- Acute effects last up to 24 hours
- “Speed runs” may last days to weeks
- “Tweaking”
- Post-run crash

The Crash

- 4 phases
 - Insomnia, paranoia, violence
 - Intense sleep
 - Intense hunger, disorientation, depression
 - Prolonged depression



Phd1.idaho.gov

Prenatal Exposure to Meth

- Very limited data
- No 'syndrome'
- May be increased risk of
 - Preterm labor
 - Placental abruption
 - Low birth weight, SGA
 - Abnormal neonatal behavior



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Prenatal Exposure to Meth

- MRI studies:
 - Suggest abnormal energy metabolism in parts of brain
 - Smaller subcortical brain volumes



Meth Use & Abuse

- Children at risk for
 - Physical abuse
 - Sexual abuse



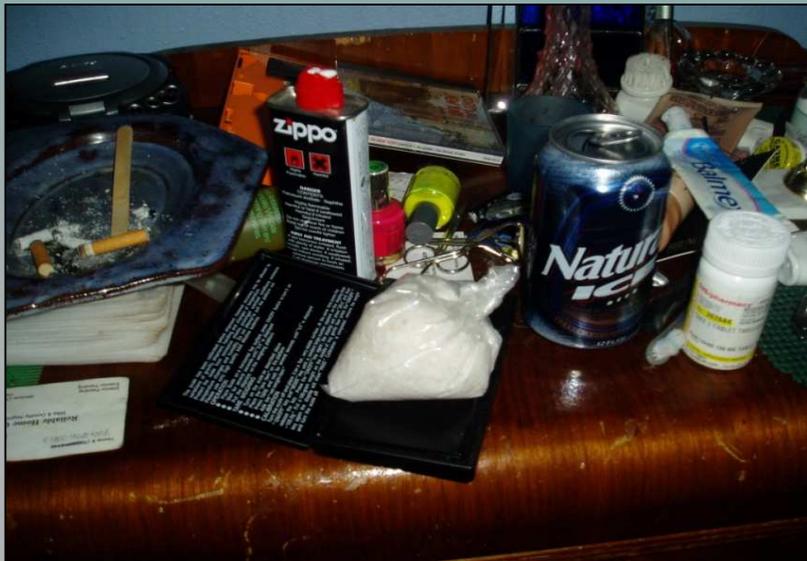
Methamphetamine Use & Neglect

- Children at risk for
 - Malnutrition and dehydration
 - Injury



Environmental Hazards

- Ingestion
- Infection
- Fire-related injury



Drug Use and Neglect

- Educational neglect
 - No one wakes child for school
 - Older sibs must stay home to care for younger ones
- Medical neglect
 - Chronic medical problems leading to preventable complications
 - Delayed medical care for acute illness (DM, asthma)

“I just liked getting away from the house...There was too much arguing, too much stress.”

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Also consider...

- Criminal behavior
 - Adult as role model
 - May use child to transport or sell drugs
 - May have child steal to support drug habit
 - Groom child to be meth cook
 - Encourage child to use meth, other drugs

One child taunted at school,
with bully whispering 'meth daddy!'

Child of meth-abusing parent

Ostler, 2007

Drug Intoxication of Child

- Ingestion (accidental or intentional)
- Passive inhalation
- Intravenous use (older children)



Meth Exposure in Young Children

- Kids are smaller, have larger surface area
- Breathe faster
- More exposure to floor, other surfaces
- More frequent hand-to-mouth transfer
- Developing brain
- Higher metabolic rate

Meth Exposure in Young Children

- Typical child ~12 months old
- 79% had symptoms
- Most kids were agitated
- 9% had seizures
- No deaths
- Symptoms persisted ave. 22 hours

Accidental meth exposure in child

- Rapid heart rate, high blood pressure
- Agitation
- Irritability
- Protracted vomiting
- Seizures
- High body temperature
- Muscle breakdown
- Roving eye movements (hypervigilant)

Children and Meth Labs

- Meth makers are not rocket scientists
- Designed for ease of concealment, not safety
- Hazards
 - Explosions
 - Ingestion/inhalation/contamination
 - Criminal behavior and violence
 - Domestic violence



www.miaimitwp.org

Meth Labs: Hazards

- Chemicals used in production
 - Depends on production method
 - Anhydrous ammonia method
 - Red phosphorous method



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Materials used in Meth production	Possible sources
<u>Precursors</u>	
Pseudoephedrine	Decongestant meds
Ephedrine	Diet or stimulant supplements
<u>Solvents</u>	
Acetone, paint thinner	Paint supplies
Camp fuel, kerosene	Camping or fuel supplies
Methanol	Auto supplies
<u>Reducing Agents</u>	
Red Phosphorous	Match striker plates
Iodine	Farming, healthcare supplies
Anhydrous ammonia	Farming supplies
Lithium	Batteries
<u>Bases</u>	
Sodium hydroxide	Lye and drain openers
Ammonium hydroxide	Household cleaners
<u>Acids</u>	
Muriatic acid	Gardening, cleaning supplies
Hydrochloric acid	Swimming pool supplies
Sulfuric acid	Household cleaner, drain opener

Solvents

- Damage to
 - Lungs
 - Liver
 - Bone marrow
 - Brain



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Phosphine Gas

- Highly toxic gas
- Irritated eyes, throat
- Short of breath
- Nauseated, with stomach ache
- Can cause *serious* damage to major organs

Caustic Ingestion



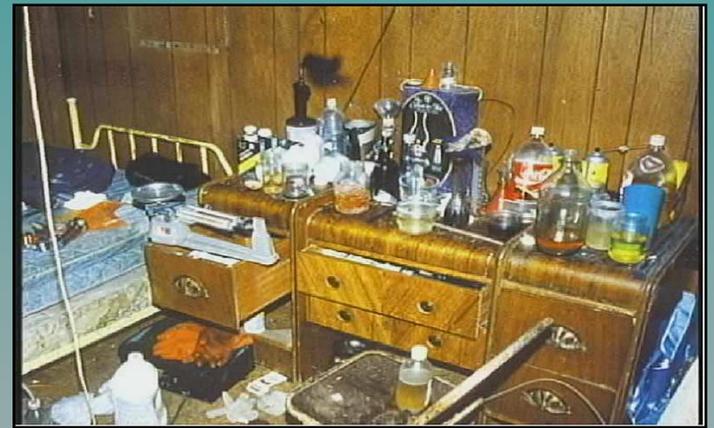
Meth Labs: Additional Risks

- Unsupervised children may
 - Cause explosions
 - Expose selves and others to chemicals



Things to Consider...

- Location of drugs/chemicals and accessibility by children
- Attraction of drugs/chemicals to children
- Age/developmental abilities of children
- General condition of home and of children



Testing for Meth

- 1/3 of meth is excreted in active form in urine
- Urine positive for BOTH meth and amphetamine
- Can test hair, blood
- Newborn: meconium, urine, hair



Medical Evaluation

- Immediate exam in ED
 - Vital signs
 - Acute signs/symptoms
 - Tox testing (urine, +/- blood)
 - Basic lab tests

Follow-Up Exam

- Within 72 hours
- Comprehensive medical exam
- Developmental screen
- Mental health screen
- Dental evaluation
- f/u on abnormal blood tests
- Recommend f/u in 1 year

Long-Term Outcome

- Limited data
- Chemicals in lab may be
 - Carcinogenic
 - Teratogenic
- Vapors may linger for long periods

What about kids whose parents don't have a lab?

- Attachment problems
- Increased risk of addiction drugs/alcohol
- PTSD
- Dissociative symptoms
- Emotional pain
- Aggression

Take-Home Messages

- Adult meth use harms children by
 - Prenatal effects
 - Increased risk of abuse and neglect
 - Injury associated with labs
- Children have behavioral, emotional problems over long-term

“I’ve got a lot of history that really hurts.”

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