



Methamphetamine "Meth" A Public Health Issue

Meth: A Public Health Issue

Methamphetamine (meth) use and production pose many threats to public health. Meth is a highly addictive man-made drug that can be smoked, snorted, injected or eaten. Meth use increases the heart rate and blood pressure to dangerously high levels and long-term meth use can lead to brain and liver damage, stroke, coma and death.

Meth is not only a health threat to the individuals who use it, it is a threat to the children living in or near meth labs that are exposed to the risk of fire, explosion and dangerous chemicals. The chemicals that are used to make meth threaten a child's still-developing nervous and reproductive systems, as well as other organs and body systems. Other health hazards children are exposed to in these chaotic environments may include abuse, neglect and unsanitary living conditions, as well as access to weapons and unguarded meth that is laying around.

Meth's Toxic Chemicals and Environmental Hazards

Found in counties across the state of Ohio, illegal labs produce meth using over-the-counter drugs and common household items. The production of meth (meth labs), the personal use and the sale of meth are all criminal offenses being prosecuted in Ohio

Recipes to make meth can be found on the Internet and meth ingredients include a few of the following common items: lithium (batteries); ether (engine starter); toluene (brake cleaner); ephedrine or pseudoephedrine (cold medicines); rubbing or isopropyl alcohol; red phosphorus (matches/flares); sulfuric acid/sodium hydroxide (drain cleaners); anhydrous ammonia (farm fertilizer); acetone; and other toxic chemicals are used in the production of meth. For every pound of meth synthesized, more than six pounds of hazardous materials or chemicals are produced.

Meth is manufactured or "cooked," threatening the health and safety of the meth cooker, individuals living at the lab site, the community surrounding the lab and the law enforcement or emergency responders who discover and/or investigate the meth lab.



Note: In February of 2006, Ohio Senate Bill 53 regulated the availability of pseudoephedrine restricted to behind the counter sales in only limited quantities. This was followed by significant decreases in the number of home meth lab busts by Ohio's Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) in 2006 and 2007.

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Meth Lab Cleanup:

A local health district responsibility?

Ohio's local health districts have no legal mandate to address meth labs. However, local health departments often serve as contacts and sources of information for concerned residents, fire and EMS-EMA officials, law enforcement agencies, child protection services and even real estate representatives. Often these above-mentioned sources ask the local health department to provide cleanup guidance and/or attest to the safety of re-occupancy of a home or a room where a meth lab operated. Local governmental agencies can address cleanup of these sites under their local building code laws and/or the health department could use their authority to require the cleanup of former meth labs under their public health nuisance laws.

National Guidelines:

In December 2007, the Methamphetamine Remediation Research Act (Public Law 110-143) was passed, which directed EPA to establish voluntary guidelines for the remediation of former meth labs based on the best currently available scientific knowledge. In August of 2009, the U.S. EPA published *Voluntary Guidelines for Methamphetamine Laboratory Cleanup* www.epa.gov/oem/methlab.htm

ODH continues to support a process-based cleanup as the best-practice for cleaning former meth lab sites in Ohio. The goal of this simple cleanup guidance is to eliminate the exposure to the former meth lab contamination by reducing and isolating any residual meth, the identified concern of former meth labs. To view a copy of the meth lab cleanup guidance document, visit:

www.odh.ohio.gov/odhPrograms/eh/hlth_as/hlth_as2.aspx

-- Select Health Assessment Section Fact Sheets from left side bar menu and then select the "Meth Lab Cleanup" --

Where can you get more information?

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