

NEW MOTHER FACT SHEET



Methamphetamine Use During Pregnancy

What is methamphetamine?

Methamphetamine, commonly known as “meth,” “crystal,” “crank,” “ice” and “speed” – is an illegal and dangerous drug that can be snorted, swallowed, smoked, injected or inhaled. A central nervous system stimulant, methamphetamine causes the brain to be flooded with dopamine, a chemical that stimulates pleasure.

The use of methamphetamine causes short- and long-term health effects, including stroke, irregular heart beat, heart damage, high blood pressure, stomach cramps, shaking, anxiety, insomnia, paranoia, and hallucinations. Continued use of methamphetamine will likely result in dependence on the drug.

What are the effects of methamphetamine on babies during pregnancy and after birth?

- Methamphetamine use during pregnancy affects development of a baby's:
 - Brain
 - Spinal cord
 - Heart
 - Kidneys

- Methamphetamine use during pregnancy may result in prenatal complications, such as premature delivery and birth deformities.
- High doses of the drug may cause a baby's blood pressure to rise rapidly, leading them to suffer strokes or brain hemorrhages before birth.
- Babies whose mothers used methamphetamine during pregnancy may experience learning disabilities, growth and developmental delays.
- Methamphetamine-exposed babies may experience gastroschisis and other problems with the development of their intestines. (Gastroschisis is a condition in which a baby is born with a hole in the abdomen, causing the intestines to be outside the body.)
- As a result of methamphetamine use by their mothers, some babies may suffer developmental and skeletal abnormalities (such as clubfoot). Some babies are born without parts of their arms or legs.
- Because methamphetamine affects transmitters in the brain, babies often experience sleep disturbances and altered behavioral patterns. These babies have been described as "irritable babies."

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- Full-term babies born to mothers who use methamphetamine will likely have difficulty sucking and swallowing, much like premature babies.
- Often babies born to meth-addicted women cannot tolerate stimuli such as human touch and light. These babies often display tremors and coordination problems.

What are the long-term effects?

The effects of methamphetamine use on brain development may last for many years. School-aged children whose mothers used methamphetamine while pregnant are more likely to be hyperactive or to have attention deficit disorders, learning disabilities and unprovoked fits of anger.

If you need additional information or help, please contact the following:

West Central Human Service Center

Bismarck 701.328.8888
or 1.888.328.2662

Lake Region Human Service Center

Devils Lake 701.665.2200
or 1.888.607.8610

Badlands Human Service Center

Dickinson 701.227.7515
or 1.888.227.7525

Southeast Human Service Center

Fargo 701.298.4500
or 1.888.342.4900

Northeast Human Service Center

Grand Forks 701.795.3000
or 1.800.845.3731

South Central Human Service Center

Jamestown 701.253.6300
or 1.800.639.6292

North Central Human Service Center

Minot 701.857.8500
or 1.888.470.6968

Northwest Human Service Center

Williston 701.774.4600
or 1.800.231.7724

For pamphlets and other materials, contact Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention Resource Center at 1.800.642.6744.

