

Ask Dr. Reef

So what's up with Meth?



By Dr. Reef Karim

It's a question I get asked all the time; from a woman on Sunset, a guy on Robertson, a research patient, a homeless person - they all ask the same question, and from me they all get the same answer. Crystal meth is a very dangerous drug. Why? First off, it's really easy to get, especially in California. Another problem is that it's being used by what looks like every socioeconomic class - the business executive, the gay and straight party scene, the couple living in the trailer, the Hollywood producer. Name a group and somebody's using it.

How about toxic effects?

The rush and high from meth are thought to be linked to a release of a very high amount of the neurotransmitter dopamine. That's the upside - the downside is that it may actually damage nerve terminals in the brain. High doses of meth can lead to a high and very dangerous body temperature and convulsions.

Longer term meth use can lead to violent behavior; confusion, paranoia, hallucinations, anxiety, strokes and a bunch of other stuff that doesn't make you the most desirable or healthiest person in the room. Not impressed yet with the power of the drug? How about this: Meth eventually causes a change in your cognition, like your ability to judge right from wrong, your problem solving ability and your overall brain power. So once you've caused these brain changes by doing meth, you may have also made it harder to actually realize that it's bad for you. Ah, the ultimate paradox.

What's the take home message?

The Meth world, although seemingly fun to some at first, is not a happy place to be and one day it'll get you. It'll rob you of your most precious item - your mind.

