

# **Methamphetamine Labs**

**Methamphetamine (meth) is a powerful, addictive drug that is illegally manufactured or “cooked” in makeshift labs. Meth labs are toxic sites containing chemicals that can cause serious health problems for anyone who comes in contact with them. Meth is also called crank, speed, crystal or ice.**

## **Health risks**

People who enter a drug lab before it has been properly cleaned and ventilated may feel headaches, nausea, dizziness and fatigue. These symptoms usually go away after several hours. Greater exposure can result in shortness of breath, cough, chest pain, lack of coordination, burns or death.

## **How to recognize a meth lab**

Meth labs may be set up at campgrounds, rest areas, rental homes, motel rooms, abandoned cars, garages, storage sheds, barns and vacant buildings.

A typical meth lab is a collection of chemical bottles, hoses and pressurized cylinders. The cylinders can be modified propane tanks, fire extinguishers, scuba tanks or soda dispensers among other things. The tanks contain anhydrous ammonia or hydrochloric acid — both highly poisonous and corrosive.

Labs are frequently abandoned, and potentially explosive and very toxic chemicals are left behind. Chemicals may also be burned or dumped in wooded areas or along roads.

## **Warning signs of living near a meth lab**

- Strong odor of solvents
- Residences with windows blacked out
- Iodine- or chemical-stained bathroom or kitchen fixtures

- Increased activity, especially at night
- Excessive trash

### **Do not enter a site that you think may be used for cooking meth**

- Labs present extreme dangers from explosions and exposure to hazardous chemicals.
- Breathing the fumes and handling substances can cause injury or death.
- Drug labs are considered hazardous waste sites and should only be entered by trained and equipped professionals.

### **Never handle materials you suspect were used for making meth, such as contaminated glassware and needles**

- Skin contact may result in burns or poisoning.
- Some of the chemicals can explode on contact with water or air.

Consider that when professionals respond to a drug lab, they do not enter the building until they have put on chemically resistant suits and boots, special gloves and respirators.

### **Who to call**

#### **To report a suspected lab:**

- Contact NW HIDTA (Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area), 1-888-609-6384.

#### **General questions, concerns about health effects of meth labs:**

- Washington State Department of Health, 1-888-586-9427.

**More information and educational resources concerning  
methamphetamine and meth labs can be found on the  
Washington State Department of Health's Clandestine Drug  
Lab Web site at [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/cdl](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/cdl)**



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