

Meth and Kids; a Deadly Combination

By now you've probably heard about methamphetamine (Meth) the highly addictive drug made from pseudoephedrine (i.e. Sudafed) and numerous other toxic chemicals. The prevalence of Meth abuse has increased by 10 percent between 2002 and 2003 and continues to rise. But what you might not know is how this drug is affecting our children.

Meth is often a generational drug. If mom or dad use and make Meth, most likely their kids will use and make Meth as well. Children exposed to Meth are likely to start young as drug runners, look outs, and manufacturers of Meth.

So what is it like to grow up with parents who use and make Meth? Deadly. Research has found that even if kids aren't present during "the cook" (a term used to describe the making of methamphetamine) contaminants are still found in the carpet, stuffed animals, floor and counter surfaces, etc. Meth parents often leave chemicals or drugs in pop bottles, juice bottles, and other familiar objects, leading children to direct exposure of the toxins. Kids from Meth homes have experienced deep lung penetration of these substances, causing such symptoms as increased heart rate, agitation, irritability, vomiting, muscle breakdown, fever, and seizures. Children of Meth homes are at further risk of great bodily harm given that hundreds of Meth labs catch fire and explode every year. The paranoia the drug causes lead parents to "booby trap" their own homes and to have weapons easily accessible, increasing the likelihood of serious injury to their children.

Even if parents are not cookers of Meth, if they use the drug, their kids are at high risk of maltreatment. During the "binge" stage, where the parent is high on Meth, kids are at risk of physical abuse. The parent is highly agitated. There may also be sexual abuse as the user's libido is greatly increased, and neglect may occur as the parent is focused on the high and not the child. During the "crash" stage, the user can not be aroused for days after coming down from the drug. At that point, the Meth parent is more likely to leave their kids with unsafe people. But even scarier is the neglect that takes place. A dramatic example was described at the recent Wisconsin Drug Endangered Children Conference in Wausau...a baby got trapped too close to a heater and literally burned to death while the parents were "crashed".

Meth parents cannot parent. They are too focused on their own needs and become entrenched in their addiction. So what can you do to help? Keep your eyes and ears open and report any suspicious activity to your local law enforcement. Visit www.MethResources.gov to find out what to look for and how you can help your community fight Meth. And if you are concerned about the welfare of a child, make a report to your local Department of Human Services. It takes a whole village to raise a child. Only together can we make a difference by not tolerating the deadly combination of Meth and kids.

Submitted by Dawn Buchholz, Waushara County Department of Human Services