

# Is my child trying or using using 'P' ....

Many parents think their children will never try a drug as dangerous as methamphetamine (or 'P' – meth in its so-called 'pure' form). But meth can be a strongly attractive drug for many teens - or they may be scared off through hearing extreme stories about what can go wrong through using it. 'P' as it is commonly referred to in New Zealand is increasingly available in rural communities and in cities.

It is highly addictive and the impact of 'P' use can last a lifetime. New Zealand is now one of the highest drug-using nations in the world and the highest per capita user of 'P'.

Methamphetamine has long been known as an aid to losing weight and this can make 'P' more attractive to young people. However, currently in New Zealand, other drugs such as cannabis and alcohol are still the major drugs of choice for young people.

Any drug use can be considered as a potential 'incubator' or seed bed for other drug use such as 'P'

*Many of these signs are equally relevant to use of other drugs – particularly cannabis. Many of the warning signs for drug use can also be the same as those for the 'ups and downs' of being a teenager- or even depression. There's also the possibility of a physical or emotional problem.*

## Some of the common signs and symptoms of meth use in teens include:

- Dilated pupils, dark circles or bags under their eyes
- Chronic eye redness, sore throat or dry cough
- Increased sensitivity to noise and light
- Increased level of self confidence and euphoria
- "Wired", restless, excitable and anxious
- Noticeable change in sleeping patterns
- Weight loss (rapid, extreme)
- Irritability or aggressiveness
- Drastic mood swings
- Dizziness or confusion, disconnected chatter
- Complaints of chest pain, rapid breathing
- Excessive sweating and body odour
- Bad breath, poor dental hygiene and teeth grinding
- Dry, itchy skin (a sense of bugs crawling under skin)
- Hanging out with a different group of friends
- Subtle changes in conversations and behaviour with friends (use coded language, more secretive about possessions or activities)
- Negative change in appearance, greasy hair, skin sores
- Change in attire, clothes that highlight/advertise/portray drug use
- Noticeable change in values, lying (especially about whereabouts), stealing, etc.
- Increase in borrowing money or trading of possessions
- Unexplained sources of money – Dealing? Stealing? Prostitution?
- Deteriorating relationship with family
- Noticeable mood swings, hostility or abusive behaviour
- Chronic fatigue, loss of interest in favourite activities, hobbies, sports
- School problems – slipping scores, truancy
- Presence of paraphernalia (Broken light bulbs, hollowed out pens, tin foil, pop cans often with hole in the side, charred bottle tops needles)

