



# Health

## Methamphetamine use is bad for oral health

By Dr. Rick Borquez

Methamphetamine use is on the rise across the U.S., affecting families from all economic levels. It is occurring across the country, from rural farm towns to suburbs and inner cities. The average user is 18 to 34 years old.

The allure of the drug is that it is cheap, easy to make, and the high lasts much longer than cocaine at 12 hours verses one hour. It is a central nervous system stimulant that can cause permanent brain damage.

Meth use has been associated with severe oral health effects. The drug can be smoked, snorted, injected or taken orally.

Oral effects of methamphetamine use can be devastating.

Reports have described rampant caries (decay) that resemble early childhood caries known as "baby bottle syndrome." The condition in these drug users is called "meth mouth."

Other contributing factors to decay are the acidic nature of the drug, the xerostomia or dry mouth effect, users craving high-calorie carbonated beverages, tooth grinding, clenching and periods of poor oral hygiene.

As more meth abusers end up behind bars, prisons are having to devote a growing portion of the health care budget to emer-

gency dental care. The problem is becoming very costly. All alternatives should be considered in treating this disease.

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