

## Innocents suffer meth's effects

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It is no secret that drug abuse [affects more than just the user](#). But methamphetamine use is perhaps unique in that its negative side effects extend far beyond the user to innocent strangers.

Meth addiction, with its brutal physical ravages, is almost like a backward trip through evolution. But the residue from meth use or, worse, its manufacture lingers silently on with toxic levels of contamination.

A meth-contaminated [residence](#) or [car](#) can cause severe sinus headaches, nosebleeds, trouble breathing, dry mouth and mouth sores, particularly in children.

Twenty-eight states have specified meth-contamination disclosure laws for houses; 17 for apartment rentals; eight for vehicles; and 14 for renting a hotel room. Meth contamination then is still very much a matter of buyer beware.

The appeal of meth is an intense euphoria. For "one pot" or "shake-and-bake" meth chefs, all it takes is pseudoephedrine, a two-liter soda bottle and a few readily available chemicals. The process, however, can be particularly combustible and result in explosions, fires and gruesome burn injuries, with resulting treatment often charged to the taxpayer.

Now meth production has become a big enough business to attract the Mexican drug cartels with their economies of scale and relatively safe havens for production in Mexico. The DEA estimates 80 percent of meth destined for America comes from Mexico.

Attempts to crack down on meth through the law have been scattershot. A federal law requires that pseudoephedrine, which has legitimate uses for asthma and cold sufferers, be kept behind the counter and that all purchases be recorded. Only two states, Oregon and Mississippi, require a doctor's prescription. Laws in 16 other states were defeated, largely because of lobbying by the over-the-counter drug industry.

Barring a significant breakthrough in the culture, law enforcement or the manufacture of pseudoephedrine, University of Texas senior research scientist Jane Maxwell may unfortunately be right in her assessment: "It's never going away. It's Whac-A-Mole."