

The Effect of Stimulant Drugs on Teeth

Saif Sheikh

1st Year BDS, Islamabad Medical and Dental College, Islamabad, Pakistan

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- Introduction
- Effect of methamphetamines
- Effect of cocaine
- Effect of nicotine
- Conclusion

Introduction

Illicit drug use is a problem that leads to several issues regarding one's oral health. The most common drugs which lead to severe deterioration in the oral cavity are cocaine and methamphetamines due to both their pharmacological and behavioral consequences. These drugs exert their effects through the central nervous system disrupting normal neurological and physiological function. The impact of these drugs leads to increased dental carries recession of the gums and several other problems. Even nicotine which is socially acceptable has adverse effects on teeth and gums including staining of teeth gum disease and it inhibits the process of healing after dental procedures. Despite increasing awareness there is still a gap in clinical management strategies aimed at assisting individuals who are affected by using such stimulants

How Cocaine Affects Your Mouth: The Hidden Damage

Cocaine may offer a temporary high, but its long-term effects—especially on your mouth—can be devastating.

One of the most serious issues is palatal perforation, a hole that forms in the roof of the mouth. This happens because cocaine cuts off blood flow, causing tissues to die. For those affected, everyday

things like eating, speaking, or even drinking water become painful and difficult. But that's just the beginning. Regular cocaine use often leads to dry mouth, loss of taste, and severe tooth decay. Many users also grind their teeth or develop gum disease. Since cocaine numbs pain, users might not realize how bad things have gotten until it's too late. Getting help isn't always easy—many people avoid the dentist out of fear or shame. But dental professionals can often spot early warning signs and step in before the damage worsens. Treatments can range from special prosthetics to surgery, depending on how severe the damage is. The bottom line? Cocaine doesn't just affect your mind—it eats away at your health, starting with your smile. Taking care of your mouth is part of taking care of yourself—and recovery is always possible, one step at a time.

The Damage of Crystal Meth

Crystal meth might seem like a quick escape, but its long-term effects can be devastating—especially on your mind and your smile. At first, the drug delivers a rush of energy and euphoria, but that high quickly fades, often leaving users feeling anxious, depressed, and desperate for more. Over time, meth rewires the brain, making it harder to think clearly, manage emotions, or even feel joy.

But the damage doesn't stop there. One of the most visible effects is what's known as "meth mouth." This isn't just a few bad cavities—it's severe tooth decay,

gum disease, and often total tooth loss. Meth dries out the mouth, erodes enamel, and leads to constant teeth grinding. Combined with poor oral hygiene and sugar cravings, the result is a mouth that deteriorates fast. For many users, the physical toll becomes a painful reminder of addiction. Smiling becomes difficult, eating hurts, and self-esteem plummets. But there's hope. With the right support—medical treatment for addiction, dental care to repair the damage, and therapy to rebuild mental health—recovery is possible. Everyone deserves a second chance at health and happiness. Understanding the real effects of meth is the first step toward helping someone take it.



FIGURE 1: *Teeth of a Crystal Meth Addict.*⁶

How Smoking and Vaping Can Steal Your Smile

If you've ever noticed yellowing teeth in smokers—or maybe even in yourself—it's not just in your head. Tobacco products, especially cigarettes, are notorious for staining teeth and dental work. A recent review of dozens of studies confirmed what many dentists have long observed: cigarette smoke leaves behind stubborn stains on everything from natural enamel and dentine to fillings, crowns, and dentures. But it's not just cigarettes. Ecigarettes and heated tobacco products (HTPs) also cause discoloration—just usually to a lesser degree. While they're often advertised as cleaner alternatives, the truth is, they're

still affecting your smile. The flavors and colors in vape liquids can cling to teeth, and HTPs release fewer stain-causing particles, but not none at all. Interestingly, nicotine isn't always the bad guy here. Research suggests that it's actually other chemicals—like tar in cigarettes or pigments in flavored vape juices—that do the most damage. In fact, nicotine gum was shown to reduce stains more than some whitening gums. Tooth-colored fillings (resin composites) are especially prone to discoloration—particularly if they're not polished properly. Even the shade and texture of the material can make a difference. At the end of the day, your smile tells a story. If quitting tobacco feels overwhelming, maybe start by thinking about the little things—like keeping your teeth bright and healthy. It's not just about looks; it's about feeling confident every time you open your mouth. And that's a great reason to take the first step. Surgery is also one of the most important steps to overcome oral cancer.⁵

Conclusion

The use of substances like methamphetamine, cocaine, and nicotine takes a serious toll on oral health—often in ways that go unnoticed until the damage is severe. Meth use is notorious for causing “meth mouth,” a condition marked by extreme tooth decay, dry mouth, and tooth loss. Cocaine users often suffer from gum disease, enamel erosion, and, in severe cases, holes in the roof of the mouth due to tissue death. Meanwhile, nicotine—whether smoked or vaped—may seem less aggressive but steadily stains teeth, weakens gum tissue, and worsens existing dental issues. What links all these substances is their ability to reduce saliva, damage soft tissues, and encourage neglect of basic oral hygiene. The result isn't just a cosmetic issue—it's pain, infection, and long-term health complications. Restoring a damaged mouth often requires extensive dental treatment and emotional healing.

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