



American Dental Association
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Meth Mouth Prevention and Community Recovery Act

House Bill — H.R. 3186 — Larsen/Sullivan
Senate Bill — S. 1906 — Baucus/Coleman

An unforeseen consequence of the methamphetamine epidemic has been the growing need for costly dental care.

In areas where people have regular access to the drug, more and more dentists have been encountering patients with a distinct and often severe pattern of oral decay. The condition (known as “meth mouth”) is characterized by teeth that are blackened, stained, rotting, and crumbling or falling apart. The damage is often so severe that extraction is the only viable treatment option.

Little is known about what actually causes meth mouth. Some have speculated that the drug’s ability to dry the mouth and the tendency of users to grind and clench their teeth are factors. However, few peer reviewed studies have been published about its prevalence, its causes, its physical effects, or its cost to the public.

Dental problems are common among drug users. Many do not care for their teeth regularly and most do not see a dentist often. Yet methamphetamine seems to be taking a unique and horrific toll inside its users’ mouths.

The *Meth Mouth Prevention and Community Recovery Act* will—

- make grants available for educating 12 to 17 year-olds about meth mouth (with an eye on preventing first-time methamphetamine use);
- expand and intensify the Department of Health and Human Services’ clinical, health services, and public health research on associations between substance use disorders, oral health, and the provision of dental care;
- authorize a study to determine whether, how, and to what degree methamphetamine use affects the demand for (and provision of) dental care; and
- promote a series of continuing education activities for dentists to learn about substance use disorders and their relationship to oral health and the provision of dental care.

For more information, please visit www.ada.org/goto/methbills.

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