

TREATING CHILDREN FROM HOMES WITH METH LABS

There are two main concerns when treating children taken from homes with meth labs - **medical evaluation and decontamination.**

MEDICAL EVALUATION

Determining the need for immediate evaluation by a health care provider can be accomplished by assessing whether the child is **asymptomatic** or **symptomatic**.

Asymptomatic

Asymptomatic children do not need to be immediately evaluated by a physician.

If the paramedic or police officer finds a child who is completely asymptomatic, there is no need to take that child to the emergency department.

In cases where medical evaluation is required before the child can be placed in an appropriate social setting, then the emergency department evaluation requires only a history and physical exam.

Subsequent to removal from the home, children can be seen at their pediatrician's office, where issues like neglect may also be addressed.

Symptomatic

For the symptomatic child, medical evaluation should happen immediately and should include a physical exam and history. All laboratory testing should be based on findings from the physical exam and/or other concerning symptoms.

Although there are concerns about the long-term effects of these exposures, there is not an initial evaluation or intervention that can identify or change the long-term outcome.

DECONTAMINATION

If there is residue on the clothes of an asymptomatic child, clothing can be changed prior to transfer. Alternately, the children can be given something disposable to sit on (newspaper, diaper, etc.) and clothes can be changed post-transfer. Regardless of symptom status, children should take a shower at some point following removal, but do not need to be decontaminated at the scene.

TIPS FOR TREATING AND DEALING WITH CHILDREN TAKEN FROM HOMES WITH METH LABS:

- **Always take the least traumatic approach.**
- **Do not take toys or any materials from the house.**

Poisons commonly found at meth production sites:

- **Solvents**
- **Ephedrine**
- **Acids**
- **Iodine**
- **Lye**
- **Phosphorus**

The dangers from living in a home that houses a methamphetamine lab can include:

- **Injury or death from fire or explosions caused by flammable materials used in the lab.**
- **Chemical burns**
- **Poisoning from ingestion or absorption of chemicals**
- **Upper respiratory symptoms, headaches and rash from exposure to chemicals in the environment**
- **Long-term effects, such as asthma and neurological problems**
- **Malnutrition**
- **Emotional and/or physical neglect**

A medical toxicologist at Tennessee Poison Center is always available to answer questions. Call 1-800-222-1222 for help 24/7.

Tennessee Poison Center is a program of Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

**For more information on methamphetamine, please visit
www.TNpoisoncenter.org or www.MethFreeTN.org**

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