

## The scabby, hollow-eyed truth

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Stomach-turning ads aimed at young Arizonans successfully drove home the danger of smoking. Now the state is trying that type of shock therapy on the meth plague.

We desperately need it to work.

Meth use among Arizona teens is 4.3 percent, almost twice the national average.

The drug is highly, rapidly addictive. And it's one of the hardest to kick.

Soaring meth use in Arizona is driving up crime and piling up hospital bills. Meth played a role in an estimated 40-50 percent of all arrests in Arizona from 2000-2005. It's a factor in two-thirds of Arizona's cases of child abuse and neglect.

From 1990 to 2004, meth-linked hospital admissions climbed 855 percent in Maricopa County and almost 3,000 percent in Arizona's rural counties.

The anti-meth ads, based on a TV campaign in Montana, aim to reduce the number of first-time users by stripping away the "cool" factor. They present the true portrait of meth: a scabby, hollow-eyed face with rotting teeth. Montana teens got the message, and meth use in that age group dropped about 38 percent.

The track record of anti-smoking ads holds out the promise of similar results in Arizona.

Riester, the Arizona advertising agency handling

the meth campaign, came up with such an attention-grabbing slogan that 97 percent of the target audience recalled it: "Tobacco: tumor-causing, teeth-staining, smelly, puking habit."

The groundbreaking campaign was a factor in Arizona's 24 percent drop in tobacco use in the 18-24 age group from 1996 to 1999, a period when tobacco use in that age group rose 17 percent nationally.

Arizona's \$5.3 million anti-meth campaign, which launched Wednesday, includes TV, radio, billboards and newspaper ads. The money comes from state funds allocated by the counties, private funds, the Maricopa County General Fund, and the Arizona Attorney General's Office.

The advertising is part of the Arizona Meth Project, which also includes community-based programs.

For anyone who knows a meth user, the ads only touch on the horror and pain.

Shock therapy is hardly enough.

**For more information, go to the Attorney General's web site: [www.azag.gov](http://www.azag.gov).**

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