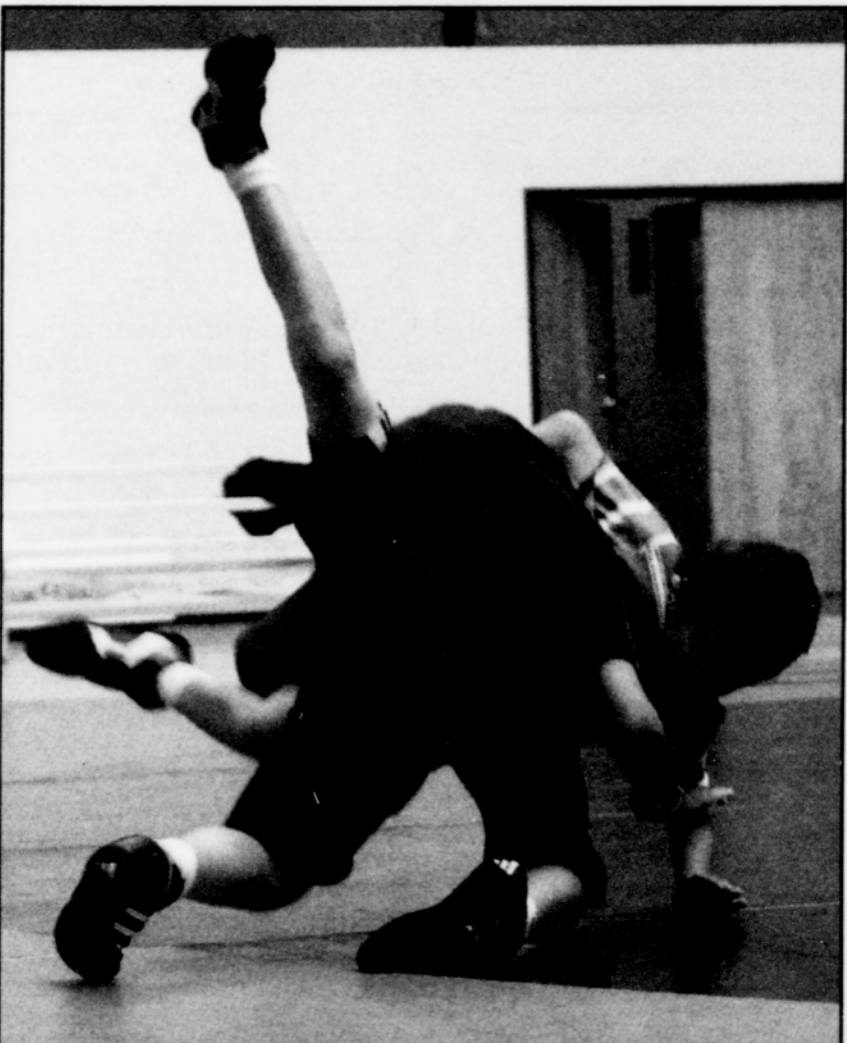




Photos by Morgan Crawford

The Siletz Diabetes Program and Siletz Tribal Housing Department Youth Services Program sponsored **Summer Sports Camps** for children in grades four through eight on July 16-20. Activities held at the Siletz rec center and Siletz Valley School included football, track, basketball, volleyball and basic wrestling/tumbling.



Above, left: Tyson Rilatos

Below: Bobby Butler

Below, left: Xander Sweat and Robbie Kirkland



Photo by Diane Rodriguez

Isabella Christensen and Rod Cross



Tooth Talk: Oral health impact of meth use includes poor hygiene, decay

By Mary Ellen Volansky, EPDH, MS

OK, so the oral health problems of methamphetamine use may not be an overwhelming motivator for not using meth. Oral health problems may not be a huge motivator for discontinuing one's use of meth. Still, the impact of methamphetamine use on oral health is one that will last beyond surviving meth use.

Meth has many names: ice, crystal, speed, glass, tweak, rock, yuba and more. Meth can be taken in tablet form by mouth, nasally by snorting the powder form, smoking the crystalline form and/or through injection – meth easily dissolves in water or alcohol.

One last comment on meth use – approximately 10 million people in the United States have tried methamphetamine at least once.¹

Meth use negatively impacts a person's oral health in three ways: poor oral hygiene, bruxism and acid erosion. One

meth user, a 39-year-old male, stated that during a binge (one year) of using methamphetamine, he reported remaining awake for 7-10 days before crashing and sleeping for 48 hours or more.²

As much as I believe in and support daily oral care, I still can imagine that someone on such a binge is not likely to brush let alone floss – and least of all not while sleeping for two days.

Bruxism doesn't even sound like something related to dental, but it is. Bruxism is the word used to describe when someone clenches or grinds their teeth together. Clenching is tightly holding your top and bottom teeth together. Grinding is the sliding back and forth or side to side of our upper and lower teeth against each other.

The result of either of these activities, clenching or grinding, is flattening and shortening of teeth. Other symptoms of clenching or grinding can arise, such

as headaches, jaw or temporomandibular joint (TMJ) pain, earaches and hot/cold or sweet sensitivity.

Meth users are not the only people to clench or grind their teeth; many of us do it, even in our sleep. But we don't usually grind and clench so severely nor in such a short period of time.

The last impact of meth on oral health is probably the one that is the most visible – decay. The pattern of severe decay seen with long-standing meth users is characteristic. As mentioned earlier, meth dissolves easily in water or in this case the water inside our mouths – saliva. It's this acid saliva that erodes the enamel to eventually make holes in it.

Smoking meth is the worst for causing this type of destruction. Lift the upper lip and look at the enamel near the gum line of the front teeth. With enough meth use, there will be crescents of enamel breakdown. Sometimes there is only

demineralization (white crescents); sometimes the hole becomes black inside.

Where does this leave a person in recovery? A person who wants to have healthy teeth for the rest of his or her life? Where is anyone who wants to have healthy teeth for the rest of their life?

Come in for an exam, get X-rays. In other words, let the dentist take a look and advise you on what can help.

Tell us of your concerns about your mouth, about any anxiety you may have for being in the dental office or a dental chair. Let us know of any tooth, gum or jaw pain. We want to help make oral health a reality and we want getting there to be easy and comfortable.

1 cdeworld.com/course/4463-methamphetamine-oral-effects-and-treatment, p. 1

2 Holt, Emily, RDH, MHA, CDA and Werner, Sara, LCH, DS, *An Inclusive Dental Hygiene Case of a Recovered Methamphetamine Addict*, April 2012, vol. 26, No. 4, p. 18.