

ASSIST

DRUG INFORMATION CARD

METHAMPHETAMINES (ICE, BASE & SPEED)

Street names

Crystal, ice, speed, base, crystal meth, meth, shabu, whiz, tina, glass, shards, goey.

What is it?

Methamphetamine is a synthetically manufactured drug that stimulates the central nervous system. It enhances mental alertness, reduce drowsiness as well as fatigue. There are three main forms of illicit methamphetamine available in Australia that are distinguished by their appearance and purity:

- Crystalline (ice or crystal) – most potent form
- Base* – medium purity (rarely seen these days)
- Powder (speed) – least potent form

*Base is basically the failed conversion of meth oil to crystal

What does it look like?

The crystal form looks like translucent crystals or crushed ice (hence its name). Speed powder ranges in colour from white to brown and may contain traces of grey or pink. Base looks like a gluggy oil/paste and varies in colour from white to brown.

How is it usually taken?

Crystal methamphetamine (ice) is manufactured to be smoked but can also be injected. Base is usually swallowed but can be injected, and speed can be snorted, swallowed or injected.

Immediate effects

The effects of methamphetamines are felt within minutes if it is smoked or injected, or about 30 minutes if snorted or swallowed. Depending on how much is used, the effects can last between 4-12 hours.

Many people who use methamphetamines report feeling the following:

- A sense of euphoria and wellbeing
- Increased alertness and energy
- Increased talkativeness
- Increased heart rate, breathing and body temperature
- Decreased appetite
- Jaw clenching and teeth grinding
- Nausea and vomiting
- A dry mouth (decreased saliva)
- Increase in libido

Higher doses or binge use may lead to:

- Nervousness, anxiety and paranoia
- Aggressiveness, hostility and violent behaviour
- Psychosis

Methamphetamine toxicity (overdose) can result in stroke, heart failure and seizures. It is characterised by blurred vision, tremors, irregular breathing loss of coordination, overheating and collapsing.

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Long-term effects

- Weight loss due to reduced appetite
- Poor sleep
- Dry mouth and dental problems
- Poor concentration and memory
- Breathlessness
- Muscle stiffness
- Heart and kidney problems
- Increased risk of stroke
- Tolerance - needing to use more to get the same effect
- Dependence
- Depression

Mixing methamphetamines with other drugs

Mixing methamphetamines, it with other stimulant drugs such as MDMA (ecstasy) and cocaine places additional stress on the heart and can lead to stroke. Methamphetamines can also be dangerous when taken with prescription antidepressant drugs called monoamine oxidase inhibitors, e.g. phenelzine (brand name 'Nardil') and tranylcypromine (brand name 'Parnate').

Many people use cannabis or benzodiazepines (i.e. Valium) to ease the come down or to sleep. This can be dangerous as it can increase the chance of toxicity as they can mask the stimulant effects of methamphetamines.

Other things to consider

- Crystal methamphetamine is a higher potency form which can deliver a stronger and longer lasting 'high'. This also means the come down (crash) is more intense. The more potent form is also more likely to cause dependence, psychosis and other long-term physical and mental health problems.

- It can take several days to 'come down' from using crystal methamphetamine and many people report feeling exhausted, depressed, irritable, with decreased appetite and difficulty sleeping.
- Research has found that once people start using the drug weekly – most will become dependent within a year.
- Long term use of crystal methamphetamines can damage the dopamine system meaning that people can feel depressed and their organisation, planning and evaluation skills can be impacted for up to a year (maybe longer) after ceasing use of the drug.
- Methamphetamine use may affect fetal development and use during pregnancy has been linked with bleeding, early labour and miscarriage. If the drug is used close to birth the baby may be born with symptoms of methamphetamine use.

Harm reduction advice

- Eat, drink water, sleep, rest and recover
- Try not to use regularly to reduce the risks of physical and psychological harms
- Try to avoid bingeing– as it will worsen the come-down and increase the likely hood of developing methamphetamine psychosis
- Methamphetamine can be a powerful sexual stimulant so practice safe sex
- If smoking, use a glass pipe (avoid light bulbs, aluminium foil) and don't share
- Where possible avoid injecting
- If injecting, make sure you use sterile injecting equipment and don't share
- If snorting, rinse your nose with clean water regularly to reduce the risk of nasal damage