



# BREAKING THE ICE IN OUR COMMUNITY

# FACT SHEET

## What is crystalline methamphetamine (ice)?

Crystalline methamphetamine, also commonly known as 'ice', is a stimulant drug, which means it speeds up the messages travelling between the brain and the body. It is a type of methamphetamine, which is generally stronger and more addictive and has more harmful side effects than the powder form known as speed.

Ice usually comes as small chunky clear crystals that look like ice. It can also come as white or brownish crystal-like powder with a strong smell and bitter taste.

### Other names

Ice, meth, crystal meth, shabu, crystal, glass, shard, p.

### How is it used?

Ice is generally smoked or injected and the effects can be felt in 3 to 7 seconds. It is sometimes swallowed (15 to 30 minutes to feel the effects) or snorted (3 to 5 minutes to feel the effects).

### Effects of crystalline methamphetamine

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries some risk. It's important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

The effects of ice can last around 6 hours, and it might be hard to sleep for a few days after using the drug.

Ice affects everyone differently, but effects may include:

- Feelings of pleasure and confidence
- Increased alertness and energy
- Repeating simple things like itching and scratching
- Enlarged pupils and dry mouth
- Teeth grinding and excessive sweating
- Fast heart rate and breathing
- Reduced appetite
- Increased sex drive

Injecting ice and sharing needles can increase the risk of:

- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- HIV and AIDS

Snorting ice can damage the nasal passage and cause nosebleeds.





## Overdose

If a large amount or a strong batch is taken, it can cause an overdose. If any of the following effects are experienced an ambulance should be called straight away by dialing triple zero (000).

Ambulance officers don't need to involve the police.

- Racing heartbeat and chest pain
- Breathing problems
- Fits or uncontrolled jerking
- Extreme agitation, confusion, clumsiness
- Sudden, severe headache
- Unconsciousness
- Drug-induced psychosis
- Stroke, heart attack and death

Deaths caused by the use of ice are usually due to seizures, heart or respiratory failure, brain haemorrhage, stroke or kidney failure.

## Coming down

It can take a few days (between 1 and 3) to 'come down' from using ice. The following effects may be experienced during this time:

- A crash in mood and energy
- Difficulty sleeping and exhaustion
- Headaches, dizziness and blurred vision
- Paranoia, hallucinations and confusion
- Irritability and feeling 'down'

Using a depressant drug such as alcohol, benzodiazepines or cannabis to help with the 'come down' effects may result in a cycle of dependence on both types of drug.

## Long-term effects

With regular use, ice may eventually cause:

- Extreme weight loss due to reduced appetite
- Restless sleep
- Dry mouth and dental problems
- Regular colds or flu
- Trouble concentrating
- Breathlessness
- Muscle stiffness
- Anxiety, paranoia and violence
- Depression
- Heart and kidney problems
- Increased risk of stroke
- Needing to use more to get the same effect
- Dependence
- Financial, work or social problems

## Psychosis

High doses of ice and frequent use may also cause 'ice psychosis'. This condition is characterised by paranoid delusions, hallucinations and bizarre, aggressive or violent behaviour. These symptoms usually disappear a few days after the person stops using ice.

## Dependence

People who regularly use ice can quickly become dependent on the drug. They may feel they need ice to go about their normal activities like working, studying and socialising, or just to get through the day.





### Mental health problems

Some people who regularly use ice may start to feel less enjoyment with everyday activities. They can get stressed easily and their moods can go up and down quite quickly. These changes can lead to longer-term problems with anxiety, depression, memory, language, thinking and judgement. People may feel these effects for at least several weeks or months after they give up ice.

### Mixing ice with other drugs

The effects of taking ice with other drugs – including over-the-counter or prescribed medications – can be unpredictable and dangerous, and could cause:

**Ice + speed or ecstasy:** enormous strain on the heart and other parts of the body, which can lead to stroke.

**Ice + cannabis or benzodiazepines:** enormous strain on the body, and more likely to overdose. The stimulant effects of ice may mask the effects of depressant drugs like benzodiazepines and can increase the risk of overdose.

**Ice + alcohol** results in a higher heart rate and blood pressure than the use of methamphetamine alone.

### Withdrawal

Giving up ice after using it for a long time is challenging because the body has to get used to functioning without it. Withdrawal symptoms generally last for around 4 to 10 days and will mostly disappear after a month. Symptoms can include:

- Cravings for ice
- Increased appetite
- Confusion and irritability
- Aches and pains
- Exhaustion
- Restless sleep and nightmares
- Anxiety, depression and paranoia

For some people, complete recovery from ice dependence can take many months.



## Further information

### Help and support lines (24 hours, 7 days a week)

#### Alcohol and Drug Information Service

Sydney metropolitan: 02 9361 8000  
Regional & rural NSW: 1800 422 599

#### Stimulant Treatment Line

Sydney metropolitan: 02 9361 8088  
Regional and rural NSW free call\*: 1800 10 11 88

*Please note free call numbers are not free from mobile phones, except Telstra mobiles*

#### Family Drug Support – [www.fds.org.au](http://www.fds.org.au)

Australia-wide: 1300 368 186

### Other help and support services and resources

If there are concerns about the health or emotional safety of children within the home, call the **Child Protection Helpline on 132 111**.

Where children are old enough to recognise they would like assistance or to talk to someone the **Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800** is Australia's only free, private and confidential phone counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25.

#### Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of NSW

02 9212 4777

*Contact AH&MRC for details of your local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health or Residential Rehabilitation Service*

#### NSW Users and AIDS Association – [www.nuaa.org.au](http://www.nuaa.org.au)

Sydney metropolitan: 02 8354 7343  
Regional and rural NSW: 1800 644 413

#### ACON – [www.acon.org.au](http://www.acon.org.au)

ACON's Substance Support Service offers specialist LGBTI-friendly counselling for stimulant and crystalline methamphetamine users.

NSW Intake Line: 02 9206 2000

#### Breaking the Ice (Australian Drug Foundation) website [www.adf.org.au/breakingtheice](http://www.adf.org.au/breakingtheice)

A joint project by the Australian Drug Foundation and NSW Health aiming to reduce harms from crystalline methamphetamine (ice) in NSW.

#### Your Room website – [yourroom.com.au](http://yourroom.com.au)

Website providing access to confidential counselling, information and resources for people in NSW, including a range of Indigenous resources.

#### Stimulant Health Check

An LGBTIQ-friendly resource with information about discussing your stimulant use in regular GP health check-ups.

ACON: 02 9206 2000

#### Links to further help and support

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/crystallinemethamphetamine/Pages/treatment.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/crystallinemethamphetamine/Pages/treatment.aspx)  
[www.druginfo.adf.org.au/contact-numbers/help-and-support](http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/contact-numbers/help-and-support)

## Statistics

#### NSW statistics on crystalline methamphetamine

[www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au/Indicator/beh\\_illimethed/beh\\_illimethed](http://www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au/Indicator/beh_illimethed/beh_illimethed)

#### Australian statistics on crystalline methamphetamine

[www.druginfo.adf.org.au/topics/quick-statistics#amphetamines](http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/topics/quick-statistics#amphetamines)

## Online resources

#### Crystalline methamphetamine

background paper – NSW data (NSW Health)  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au/crystallinemethamphetamine/Publications/background-paper.pdf](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/crystallinemethamphetamine/Publications/background-paper.pdf)

#### Crystalline methamphetamine

Key messages (NSW Health)  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au/crystallinemethamphetamine/Publications/key-messages.pdf](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/crystallinemethamphetamine/Publications/key-messages.pdf)

#### Crystalline methamphetamine (ice) (NSW Health)

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/crystallinemethamphetamine/Documents/crystalline-methamphetamine.pdf](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/crystallinemethamphetamine/Documents/crystalline-methamphetamine.pdf)

#### Ice: family and friends support guide

[www.druginfo.adf.org.au/infographics/ice-family-friends-support-guide](http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/infographics/ice-family-friends-support-guide)

#### For information on withdrawal and treatment

see [www.adf.org.au/cdat-breaking-the-ice-resources](http://www.adf.org.au/cdat-breaking-the-ice-resources)

# BREAKING THE ICE IN OUR COMMUNITY



[twitter.com/austdrug](https://twitter.com/austdrug)



[facebook.com/australiandrugfoundation](https://facebook.com/australiandrugfoundation)



[adf.org.au/subscribe](mailto:adf.org.au/subscribe)



[adf.org.au/breakingtheice](http://adf.org.au/breakingtheice)



[yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au](http://yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au)

Suite 903, Level 9  
122 Arthur Street, North Sydney NSW 2060  
PO Box 338, North Sydney NSW 2059  
Email [adf@adf.org.au](mailto:adf@adf.org.au)  
Telephone 1300 858 584 (DrugInfo)

## FACT SHEET

© The Australian Drug Foundation, 2016.  
ABN 66 057 731 192.

**Disclaimer:** The Australian Drug Foundation has used its best endeavours to ensure that material contained in this publication was correct at the time of printing. The Australian Drug Foundation gives no warranty and accepts no responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of information and reserves the right to make changes without notice at any time in its absolute discretion.