

Breaking the ice in our community

What is 'ice'?

Ice, or crystalline methamphetamine is a stimulant which means it speeds up messages travelling between the brain and the body.

Ice is generally smoked or injected and the effects can be felt immediately. It can also be swallowed or snorted – the effects can take about 30 minutes to feel if used this way.

Street names: ice, crystal meth, crystal, glass, shard, shabu, meth, tina, rice

How ice affects someone

When they're 'high' (effects can last up to 8 hours)

Ice can affect people differently, but they may experience:

Body

Enlarged pupils and dry mouth

- Teeth grinding and excessive sweating
- Fast heart rate and breathing
- Feeling less hungry
- Feeling dizzy and shaky
- Over-sensitive skin that may cause people to scratch repetitively

Mind

- Feelings of extreme pleasure
- Increased confidence, alertness and energy
- Increased sex drive
- Feeling anxious or panicky
- Taking more risks than usual
- Feeling paranoid or like people want to hurt you
- Yelling or being aggressive
- Some people can get violent

'Coming down'

It can take a few days to come down from using ice. In that time people may experience:

- Difficulty sleeping, including twitching arms and legs
- Exhaustion – needing sleep
- Headaches, dizziness and blurred vision
- Paranoia, hallucinations and confusion
- Irritability and feeling 'down'
- Short-term memory loss

Dependence

It's easy to become dependent (addicted) on ice if it's used regularly and giving it up can take a couple of goes.

One of the reasons people use ice is because it targets the 'feel good' part of the brain. In fact, it overworks it so much that things that would usually make them feel good, like hanging out with family and friends, seeing a funny movie or having a good yarn with a friend, don't make them happy anymore. They need the strong effects of ice to feel good.

So when someone gives up ice they can be stressed, moody and 'down' until their brain gets back to normal – which can take weeks, months and for some people, can take years. That's why it's so hard to give up ice.

What you can do

It helps just to listen if the person wants to talk about their ice use. Try to listen without interrupting, judging or becoming upset. When they've finished talking, repeat what they've said back to them in a calm voice – this helps to check in and see that you have understood what they are telling you.

Doing this creates a 'safe space' for them to be honest about their problem. If they want help, they know that they can always come to you and not be judged.

Encourage them to change

You can help promote change by being available and supportive.

Choose a time to talk when you are both relaxed and the person isn't affected by ice. Ask calm, respectful questions, for example:

"What do you like about using ice?"

"What don't you like?"

"Where are you at with your ice use today?"

If they don't want to talk, don't force the conversation.

Set boundaries

Make it clear to the person what *is* and *isn't* acceptable behaviour and the consequences for breaking your rules.

It's important to stay safe, and get support for your own and your family's sake.

It's difficult to see someone you love getting into debt or breaking the law, but consider how giving them money may help them continue using ice.

If you do give them money, make sure you don't give them more than you can afford.

Real, long term change takes a big commitment from the person who is using ice, and they may need your support, or help from others.

Acknowledge the small changes

It can be hard to stay positive when someone you love is struggling with ice. Try to acknowledge the positive steps made towards dealing with these challenges, by both the person using ice and yourself.

Make sure the person knows how much you like spending time with them when they aren't affected by ice.

Look into treatment options

If the person is talking about giving up ice, make sure you're prepared with information on treatment options.

Treatment options

Talk to your GP, a local drug and alcohol worker or health service.

A range of treatment options are available to assist someone who might be dependent on ice.

They include:

- Withdrawal management/detoxification
- Stimulant Treatment Programs
- Counselling
- Residential rehabilitation
- Drugs in pregnancy services
- Complementary therapies
- Support groups

There are seven Aboriginal rehab and treatment service options in NSW. Find more information about Aboriginal-specific treatment and support at www.yourroom.com.au/aboriginal-info/support-and-treatment

Sometimes a person isn't ready to stop using ice, but treatment that focuses on reducing the harms may be helpful.

Forcing someone into treatment when they don't feel ready probably won't be successful.

Coping with someone's bad reaction to ice

Stay calm

- Keep your voice low, calm and steady
- Stay calm and try not to make too much eye contact
- Give the person space and don't crowd them
- Move children, older people and others away
- Make the area as safe as you can, remove dangerous objects
- Encourage them to drink some water
- Don't ask too many questions. Say things like, "I'm not angry with you, I just want to make sure you are safe"
- Try to use the person's name. For example, "Jason, can you tell me what's going on for you?"

Reassure

- Be supportive. Tell them that they will be okay, and that what they're feeling will pass when the ice wears off
- Help them calm down by moving them to a quiet place where they can rest
- Listen to them and respond with calming comments. This isn't a time to argue

Respond

- Call an ambulance by dialing triple zero (000) if the person has any of the following symptoms:
 - Racing heart beat and chest pain
 - Breathing problems
 - Fits or uncontrolled jerking
 - Extreme agitation, confusion or clumsiness
 - Sudden, severe headache
 - Unconsciousness
- Ambulance officers don't need to involve the police
- If the person becomes violent or threatens to hurt themselves or someone else, move yourself and others to a safe place and call the police by dialing triple zero (000)

You aren't alone and help is available

We know this isn't easy for you – you're probably feeling anxious, helpless and desperate for a solution. And to make things harder, not much can change until the person using ice is ready to admit there's a problem and is willing to make a commitment to changing their use.

But there are things you can do to stay on top of your own emotions.

You could consider:

- Talking with a trusted friend or family member
- Talking to a local doctor or Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS)
- Joining a support group (women's/men's group)
- Doing activities that you enjoy
- Making sure you 'have a life' – continue to do the things that make you happy and stay connected to your family

Help and support

Alcohol and Drug Information Service NSW (ADIS)

24/7 confidential service providing phone counselling, advice, information and referrals to treatment services in your area.

T: 9361 8000
(Sydney metropolitan)

T: 1800 422 599
(regional and rural and NSW, free call from a landline)

www.yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au

Stimulant Treatment Line

24/7 confidential service offering education, information, referral, crisis counselling and support specifically for stimulant use such as speed, ice, ecstasy and cocaine.

T: 9361 8088
(Sydney metropolitan)

T: 1800 101 188
(regional and rural NSW, free call from a landline)

Family Drug Support

24/7 support for families of people who have an alcohol or drug problem.

T: 1300 368 186
(Australia-wide)

Crystal Meth Anonymous

A free 'twelve step' group support meeting for people experiencing problems with their ice use – visit the website to find a meeting near you.

www.crystalmeth.org.au

Narcotics Anonymous

A free 'twelve step' group support meeting for people experiencing problems with drugs – visit the website to find a meeting near you.

www.na.org.au

Counselling Online

A free 24/7 online counselling service for people using alcohol and other drugs, as well as their family and friends.

www.counsellingonline.org.au

Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF)

Information about ice and its effects, resources, details on ice forums in NSW and a list of help and support services in NSW.

www.adf.org.au/breakingtheice

New South Wales Users and AIDS Association (NUAA)

Find a needle and syringe program, giving out clean, free injecting equipment near you.

T: 8354 7343
(Sydney metropolitan)

T: 1800 644 413
(rural and regional NSW, free call from a landline)

Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC)

The peak representative body and voice on Aboriginal health services in NSW.

T: 9212 4777
www.ahmrc.org.au

Aboriginal residential rehabilitation services in NSW

Oolong House, Nowra

T: 4422 0644
www.oolonghouse.org.au

The Glen Centre, Hunter Valley

T: 4388 6360
www.theglencentre.org.au

Namatjira Haven, Alstonville

T: 6628 0520
www.namatjirahaven.com

Benelong's Haven Family Rehabilitation Centre, Kinchela

T: 6567 4880
www.benelongshaven.com.au

The Weigelli Centre Aboriginal Corporation, Cowra

T: 6345 1868
www.weigelli.com.au

Orana Haven, Brewarrina

T: 6874 4983 or 6874 4886
www.oranahaven.com.au

Maayu Mali, Moree

T: 6752 5036
www.marrs.org.au

Thank you to members of the Leadership Group of the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Network (ADAN) and the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) for their editorial input into this resource.