

Harm reduction and methamphetamine (ice) use ●

This fact sheet provides information on harm reduction for people who use methamphetamine, including methamphetamine (ice). While all drug use poses risks, some people will continue to use drugs and it is important that they know how to reduce harms and protect their health.

- Methamphetamine increases heart rate, blood pressure and body temperature. It is important to stay hydrated, keep a bottle of water handy and take frequent sips because you may forget to drink when you are intoxicated and ‘on the go’.
- Be aware, though, that excessive fluid intake (i.e. more than 1 litre per hour) can sometimes cause brain swelling, convulsions, coma and, in extreme cases, death. This includes all fluids, including alcohol and sports/electrolyte drinks as well as plain water.
- Cut back on alcohol as it dehydrates the body. In addition, too many caffeinated or sugary drinks could worsen health problems.
- Combining drugs, even with legal substances like alcohol, can cause unpredictable effects and might lead to overdose.
- Methamphetamine overdose (toxicity) is a medical emergency. Signs of an overdose can include:
 - > hot, flushed or very sweaty skin, which may indicate high fever
 - > severe headache
 - > chest pain
 - > unsteady walking (gait)
 - > muscle rigidity, tremors, spasm, fierce jerking movements of the limbs, seizures
 - > severe agitation or panic
 - > difficulty breathing
 - > altered mental state (e.g. confusion, disorientation).

If left untreated, overdose may lead to heart attack, stroke, breakdown of muscle tissue, kidney failure and possibly death.
- Methamphetamine can lower inhibitions and can increase sexual desire. If you’re going to use methamphetamine and have sex, make sure you plan ahead by having plenty of condoms, dams, lube and gloves on hand.
- Prolonged use of methamphetamine can keep you awake for long periods of time, which can lead to insomnia. Lack of sleep can have serious psychological and physical effects. Try to avoid using methamphetamine for extended periods, and consider organising people that you feel safe with who you could call if you start to feel panicked or paranoid.
- Injecting methamphetamine with used injecting equipment increases the likelihood of contracting blood-borne viruses (such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C), blood infections and skin abscesses. NEVER share kits (needles/syringes), spoons, water, filters, alcohol swabs or tourniquets. In Victoria, free sterile injecting equipment is available from Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) outlets and from selected pharmacists. Call DrugInfo on 1800 85 85 84 or visit www2.health.vic.gov.au/alcohol-and-drugs/aod-treatment-services/aod-prevention-harm-reduction/needle-and-syringe-program for your nearest NSP outlet.
- Mouth sores and infections can be common among people who regularly use methamphetamine. It is important to maintain good oral health, brush and floss your teeth regularly. Drink water or fruit juice or chew gum to keep your mouth moist and to reduce cracks, blisters and clenching. For people who smoke methamphetamine it is important to protect your lips (lip balm will help protect and heal chapped lips), and to use your own equipment and not share it with others.

Always call an ambulance on triple zero (000) if an overdose is suspected – tell the paramedic exactly what has been taken. Paramedics are there to help and will not involve the police unless there is a danger to themselves or others.

If you would like further information on harm reduction strategies, Harm Reduction Victoria (HRV) is the statewide drug user organisation in Victoria representing people who use drugs, including methamphetamine. It is a peer-based organisation that is staffed by people with lived experience of drug use. They provide harm reduction and education to people who use drugs and to advocate for better policy responses to drug use and treatment in Victoria. HRV can be reached during office hours on (03) 9329 1500.

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Other help, support services and resources

Victorian AIDS Council • vac.org.au/lgbti-health/alcohol-and-other-drug-services-aod

Links to further help and support • adf.org.au/help-support/

Information on methamphetamine • adf.org.au/drug-facts/ice/

For information on treatment

There are a range of treatment services available to support the recovery from alcohol and drug misuse. To find out more information about treatment services in your area, contact the alcohol and drug intake and assessment service.

ACSO • 1300 022 760

(9am–5pm Monday–Friday)

DirectLine is also available to provide free and confidential information, counselling and referral for alcohol and drug issues 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

DirectLine • 1800 888 236 • www.directline.org.au

Further information

DirectLine • 1800 888 236

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

Ice Advice Line • 1800 423 238

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

Family Drug Help • 1300 660 068 • www.familydrughelp.com.au (Victorian-based)

Services are available to support those around you who may be affected by your drug use. As well as providing understanding, they can provide information about how best to help during treatment.

Family Drug Support • 1300 368 186 • www.fds.org.au (Australia-wide)



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