

What is methamphetamine (ice)?

Methamphetamine, also commonly known as ‘ice’, is a stimulant drug, which means it speeds up the messages travelling between the brain and the body. Ice is generally stronger, more addictive and has more harmful side effects than the powdered form known as speed.

What does it look like?

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).

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.

Effects of 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.

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.

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 dialling triple zero (000).

Ambulance officers don't need to involve the police.

Overdose effects can include:

- 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.

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.

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.

Other help, support services and resources

If there are concerns about the health or emotional safety of children within the home, check the Child Protection number for your area here: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/child-protection/child-protection-contacts

After hours Child Protection Emergency Service • 13 12 78

(5.00pm–9.00am Monday–Friday, 24 hours on weekends and public holidays)

Kids Helpline • 1800 55 1800

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

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)



● Stay informed

 twitter.com/alcoholdrugfdn

 facebook.com/alcoholdrugfdn

● Contact us

 1300 85 85 84

adf.org.au

© Alcohol and Drug Foundation 2017

ABN 66 057 731

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.

These fact sheets have been developed with funding provided by Murray PHN.