

# Ice.

## What is ice?

Crystal methamphetamine ('ice') is a stimulant drug, which means it speeds up the messages travelling between the brain and the body. It's stronger, more addictive and therefore has more harmful side effects than the powder form of methamphetamine known as speed.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>1</sup>

### Other names

Crystal meth, shabu, crystal, glass, shard, P.<sup>1,2</sup>

### How is it used?

Ice is generally smoked (feel the effect almost immediately) or injected (15 to 30 seconds to feel the effects). It is sometimes swallowed (15 to 20 minutes to feel the effects) or snorted (3 to 5 minutes to feel the effects).<sup>3</sup>

## Effects of ice

**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 for up to 12 hours<sup>2</sup> but 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.<sup>1,3,4,5</sup>

If injecting drugs there is an increased risk of:

- tetanus
- infection
- vein damage.

If sharing needles there is an increased risk of:

- hepatitis B
- hepatitis C
- HIV and AIDS.<sup>1</sup>

Snorting ice can damage the nasal passage and cause nose bleeds.

## Overdose

If you take a large amount or have a strong batch, you could overdose. If you or someone you know is having any of the symptoms below, call an ambulance straight away by dialling triple zero (000). Ambulance officers don't need to involve the police. Symptoms of overdose may include:

- racing heartbeat and chest pain
- breathing problems
- fits or uncontrolled jerking
- extreme agitation, confusion, clumsiness
- sudden, severe headache
- unconsciousness
- stroke, heart attack or death.<sup>1,4,6</sup>

Find out more about overdose at [adf.org.au/insights/overdose](http://adf.org.au/insights/overdose)

### Coming down

It can take several days to come down from using ice. The following effects may be experienced during this time:

- difficulty sleeping and exhaustion
- headaches, dizziness and blurred vision
- paranoia, hallucinations and confusion
- irritability and feeling 'down'.<sup>1,4</sup>

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 drugs.

### 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 on ice
- financial, work or social problems.<sup>4,7</sup>

### Ice psychosis

High doses of ice and frequent use may 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.<sup>1</sup>

### 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.<sup>1,5</sup>

### Mental health problems

Some people who regularly use ice may start to feel less enjoyment of 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 and depression. People may feel these effects for at least several weeks or months after they give up ice.<sup>8</sup>

### 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.<sup>9</sup>
- **Ice + alcohol, 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.<sup>9</sup>

### 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 settle down after a week 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.<sup>8</sup>

Find out more about withdrawal at [adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/supporting-a-loved-one/withdrawal/](http://adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/supporting-a-loved-one/withdrawal/)

## Getting help

If your use of amphetamines is affecting your health, family, relationships, work, school, financial or other life situations, you can find help and support.

Help and support services directory:

[adf.org.au/help-support/support-services-directory/](https://adf.org.au/help-support/support-services-directory/)

Information about treatment:

[adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/supporting-a-loved-one/treatment/](https://adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/supporting-a-loved-one/treatment/)

### Ice and the law

Use of methamphetamine (ice) is against the law. Federal and state laws provide penalties for possessing, using, making, selling, importing or exporting, or driving under the influence of methamphetamine. The importation or exportation and the procuring of precursor drugs (such as pseudoephedrine) with the intention of manufacturing a controlled drug, is also against the law. Laws have been introduced that prevent the sale and possession of ice pipes in some states and territories.

### Ice statistics

#### National

- 6.3% of Australians aged 14 years and over have used meth/amphetamines one or more times in their life.<sup>9</sup>
- 1.4% of Australians aged 14 years and over have used meth/amphetamines in the previous 12 months. Of these people, 57.3% report crystal or ice as main form of the drug used.<sup>9</sup>

#### Young people

- 2.4% of 12-17 year olds have tried amphetamines.<sup>10</sup>
- Young Australians (aged 14–24) first try meth/amphetamines at 18.6 years on average.<sup>9</sup>

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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.

**Other help, support services and resources**

Links to further help and support • [adf.org.au/help-support/](http://adf.org.au/help-support/)

Information on methamphetamine impacts and emerging treatments • [adf.org.au/insights/methamphetamine-impacts-treatment/](http://adf.org.au/insights/methamphetamine-impacts-treatment/)

**Further information**

**DrugInfo • 1300 85 85 84**

Free confidential information and advice about alcohol and other drugs (9am - 5pm, Mon-Fri)

**Family Drug Help • 1300 660 068 • [www.familydrughelp.com.au](http://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](http://www.fds.org.au)** (Australia-wide)



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