

ICE



What is 'ice'?

'Ice' is a street name for crystal methamphetamine hydrochloride, which is a powerful, synthetic stimulant drug. Stimulant drugs speed up the messages going to and from the brain.

Ice is more potent than other forms of amphetamines. It is more pure than the powder form of methamphetamine (speed).

Ice often appears as large, transparent and 'sheet-like' crystals that may have a hint of pink, blue or green colour.

Other street names for ice include meth, d-meth, crystal, crystal meth, shabu, batu, tina and glass.

How is it used?

Ice can be smoked, swallowed, snorted, injected or inserted anally (shafting). Some people smoke ice using a glass pipe, while others heat it on aluminium foil and inhale the vapours (chasing).

Ice use in Australia

- In 2004, 3.2 per cent of Australians aged 14 years and older had used amphetamines for non-medical purposes in the previous year, and over 38 per cent of this group reported the type of amphetamine they used was ice.
- Ice use among injecting drug users increased from 15 per cent in 2000 to 52 per cent in 2004.
- In 2004, 63 percent of a sample of people

who used ecstasy had tried ice at least once, and 45 per cent had used ice in the past 6 months.

What are effects of ice?

The effects of any drug (including ice) vary from person to person, depending on the individual's size, weight and health, how much and how the drug is taken, whether the person is used to taking it, and whether other drugs are taken. Effects also depend on the environment in which the drug is used – such as whether the person is alone, with others or at a party.

Immediate effects

Shortly after taking ice, a person may experience a number of psychological and physical effects, including:

- Feelings of euphoria, excitement and well being
- Increased alertness, confidence and libido, more energy, feelings of increased strength, talkativeness, repeating simple acts, itching, picking and scratching
- Tremors of the hands and fingers
- Speeding up of bodily functions, such as increased breathing rate, body temperature, blood pressure, a rapid and irregular heartbeat, and excessive sweating
- Difficulty sleeping, reduced appetite, dilated pupils, dry mouth, stomach cramps, nausea, dizziness, blurred vision and severe headaches

- Abrupt shifts in thought and speech, which can make someone using ice difficult to understand
- Nervousness, panic attacks, anxiety, paranoia
- Irritability, aggression, hostility and amphetamine psychosis which may include hallucinations, paranoid delusions and bizarre behaviour.

The variable purity of each batch of ice increases the risk of negative effects and overdose.

Coming down

As the effects of ice wear off, a person may experience a range of symptoms, such as tension, depression, radical mood swings, uncontrollable violence and exhaustion.

Long-term use of ice can result in a number of health issues, including:

- High blood pressure and increased risk of heart related complications such as heart attack and heart failure
- Malnutrition and rapid weight loss due to reduced appetite
- Chronic sleeping problems
- Reduced immunity and increased susceptibility to infections due to the person not sleeping or eating properly
- Depression, anxiety, tension and paranoia
- Brain damage (there is some evidence that amphetamines may damage brain cells, resulting in reduced memory function and other impairments in thinking)

- Dental problems (from grinding teeth)
- Smoking ice can damage the lungs
- Snorting ice can damage the lining of the nose
- Injecting ice can lead to infections, abscesses and vein damage. Sharing injecting equipment increase the risk of contracting blood-borne viruses, such as hepatitis B and C, and HIV.

Other effects and issues

Due to the disinhibiting effects of ice, some people may be prone to practise unsafe sex. This increases the chances of contracting sexually transmitted infections and blood-borne viruses, such as hepatitis B and C and HIV.

As well as health problems, using ice (or any drug) can result in family, financial, legal, work, school and other personal problems. These problems can be made much worse because people who use ice can become irritable, hostile and violent and/or experience other psychological problems. It is also dangerous to drive a vehicle or operate machinery after using ice.

Ice and pregnancy

Using ice while pregnant can affect the development of the foetus. Methamphetamine use has been linked with bleeding, early labour, an increased risk of foetal abnormalities and changes to the brain.

If amphetamines are used close to birth, the baby may be unsettled, overactive and agitated. Babies born to mothers who regularly used amphetamine during their pregnancy may experience withdrawal symptoms after birth.

Tolerance and dependence

People who use ice can quickly develop a tolerance to the drug, so increasingly greater doses are needed to achieve the desired effects. Ice can also lead to physical and/or psychological dependence. People who are psychologically dependent on ice find that using it becomes far more important than other activities in their lives. They crave the drug, and find it difficult to stop using it. Physical dependence occurs when a person's body adapts to the drug – the body gets used to functioning with the drug present. If a person who is physically dependent on ice suddenly stops taking it, they may experience withdrawal symptoms.

Withdrawal

Some of the withdrawal symptoms people may experience include:

- Disorientation
- Hunger
- Extreme fatigue and exhaustion
- Decreased energy apathy and reduced ability to experience pleasure
- Anxiety, irritability and depression
- Craving ice.

Information source: Australian Drug Foundation

Ice on a sunny day



PERSONAL STORY

Just as I thought I was a recreational user of just about every drug ever known to man or woman, along comes ICE. At 38 years of age, I thought I had my life under control and managed with drugs. I was introduced to ICE one sunny Queensland day – a friend called in and said “would you like to try some ICE?”

I replied “yes of course”. That was the start of the absolutely worse period of my life. Not sure what happened next, but suddenly every 20 minutes I needed another pipe. Then I couldn't leave the house for long periods because of the separation and anxiety. For the next 12 months there was a roller coaster of three days awake then the three days down.

During the time feeling up, it was just about impossible to do any normal things, and then the three days down would consist of eating high carb/sugar foods and sleeping for 12 or 13 hours straight, popping Stilnox (a medication for sleeping) and Valium — my body would scream out for nothing else but more ice! – until I scored more.

Nothing — I mean nothing — would cut it! ICE was such a new drug on the Australian shores that no one seemed to know a lot about it. After 12 months of the roller coaster, I'd had enough! A user friend and myself spent four days ringing hospitals, drug rehab centres, local doctors – anyone that might have had some insight into ICE. We finally contacted the Palm Beach Currumbin Drug and Alcohol Hospital at Currumbin on the Gold Coast.

They said it would be \$4 000 for one week and I booked in. The whole hospital was full of loonies. I attended all classes, just wanting to meet someone that may have walked down this lonely road of ICE. I started doing head stands up against the wall within two hours. I was doing them without any help from the wall – from then on I took back some kind of control of my life, I stayed one night, then returned to the head of the hospital and convinced him that I would stay straight and be responsible for my life: he signed the release form.

I stayed straight for one year. Then came the relapse — never expecting to go down that road again... I did! Another roller coaster ride, this time it only lasted three, maybe four months. This time I discovered a book only available on the internet at www.nomoreaddiction.com so I downloaded *The Game of Life*. It made sense to me that I was either a drug addict, I could be a recovering drug addict, or I could LIVE LIFE – and so I did.

I have studied for a licence that has enabled me to find full-time work in a industry that I love. My message to anyone battling ICE — the strongest drug I have ever had — is to never stop giving up on giving up. There is no SAFE way to take this drug. - L.