

METHAMPHETAMINE

Factsheet for Families

METH
CHECK

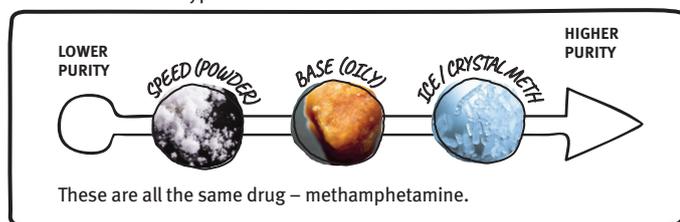


WHAT IS METHAMPHETAMINE?

(Meth, Ice, Crystal, Shard, Speed, Base, Goey, Fast, Whizz, Tina, P, Pure)

- Methamphetamine is a powerful stimulant drug.
- Its effects include increased alertness and energy, euphoria, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, increased body temperature, increased heart-rate, agitation, anxiety and paranoia.
- Effects peak after 2-3 hours and last between 4 and 24 hours.
- It is illegal to possess, supply, traffic or manufacture methamphetamine in Canada.

There are different types of meth:



There are also prescription medications that contain amphetamine or amphetamine-like substances, e.g. Ritalin, Dexamphetamine.

- Crystal methamphetamine (ice) is the most potent form of the drug. While all forms of meth can cause harm, people who use ice tend to experience more problems much sooner than those who use speed or base because it is more potent.
- Meth primarily works by releasing a large amount of the pleasure chemical 'dopamine' into the brain, as well as other neurotransmitters called noradrenaline and serotonin.
- The more regularly someone uses meth, the less they feel the effects of dopamine, and the harder it is for their body to produce dopamine naturally. As a result, people need to take more of the drug to feel the same effects.

WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE?

COUNSELLING is the most common form of treatment for problematic drug use. During counselling, people are encouraged to talk about their substance use and other related issues such as their health, relationships, behaviours and lifestyle. Sessions may focus on developing problem-solving skills, managing risky situations and identifying healthy coping strategies. Counselling is also available for family members and support people.

DETOXIFICATION / WITHDRAWAL SERVICES is treatment where a person is supervised while their body comes off a drug. Withdrawal services may be offered in the home, via daily visits to a doctor, in a hospital or in a dedicated residential setting, and may involve medication. It is important to know that detoxification without appropriate follow-up services (such as counselling or rehabilitation) is usually not enough to help a person stay off a drug. Self withdrawal is also possible.

REHABILITATION SERVICES help people who have detoxed off drugs to address issues in their life which contributed to their drug use in the past, including strategies to prevent relapse. Residential rehabilitation refers to live-in facilities (usually 3-6 months or longer). Non-residential rehabilitation services are usually structured 'day programs' that the person attends regularly while they are still living at home.

PEER SUPPORT GROUPS are voluntary self-help groups open to individuals seeking to address their drug and alcohol use, or to maintain abstinence, e.g. Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and SMART Recovery.

TIPS FOR FAMILIES

It's important to remember that families have different ways of coping when they discover that someone is using meth. There is no 'right' way to respond.

Things to consider:

- Try not to panic. Not everyone who uses the drug will develop a problem.
- You may feel angry, upset, scared or helpless. This is normal.
- Get the facts and be informed. Choose reputable sources for drug information (e.g. government websites or established alcohol and drug organisations).
- Try talking with the person when they are not 'high' or 'coming-down'. Maintain open and honest communication. Ask questions. Listen actively.
- Let the person know how their meth use is impacting you. Use "I" statements, rather than "you" statements. Explain your concerns in a calm and clear way. Accept that they may not agree with you.
- Have clear boundaries about what is and what is not OK in your house, space and relationship with realistic, workable consequences.
- Separate what is about the meth use, and what isn't.

RESPONDING TO COMPLICATIONS

It is important to recognise serious physical and mental health complications when they occur.

Physical complications include severe headache, chest pain, vomiting, overheating, seizures and loss of consciousness.

Mental health complications include confusion, disorientation, extreme agitation, panic, aggression and psychosis (e.g. seeing or hearing things that aren't there, feeling overly fearful, paranoid or thinking that others are out to get them).

IF ANY OF THESE THINGS HAPPEN, SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY. SEE YOUR DOCTOR, GO TO YOUR LOCAL HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT OR CALL '911' AND ASK FOR 'AMBULANCE'.

If someone is unconscious and breathing, turn them on their side. If they are not breathing, perform CPR if you are able to. Wait with them until the ambulance arrives. Tell all medical staff exactly what has been taken. The police will not usually be called to attend unless there are concerns around safety or violence.

SUPPORTING CHANGE

There are things you can do to help someone who is attempting to change their meth use.

- Acknowledge and celebrate any positive changes, no matter how small. Things like using less, using in a safer way or improving their health and lifestyle, are positive first steps.
- Having a slip-up can be a part of the recovery process. It is also an opportunity to learn. Encourage them to keep going and to not give up.
- Encourage the person to develop good sleep habits, eat healthy, exercise regularly, avoid 'triggers' (i.e. people, places or events associated with using meth) and get active by doing things like sport, hobbies, interests, social activities etc.
- Remember, people who are cutting back or quitting meth can experience low mood, anxiety, poor sleep and irritability. Problems with memory, concentration and planning are also common. These symptoms can sometimes last for months. They are signs that the body is readjusting from using the drug, and will improve over time.

Acknowledgements

"Tips for Families of People Who Use Methamphetamine". 360 Edge. 2016. www.360edge.com.au

"Tips and Tricks for New Players: a guide to becoming familiar with the alcohol and other drugs sector – 4th edition". ADCA. 2013.

Family Drug Support, "A Guide to Coping" www.fds.org.au

This resource has been modified for use in Canada. It was originally developed by Insight - Centre for Alcohol and Other Drug Training and Workforce Development, Queensland, Australia.

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WHAT IF THEY DON'T WANT HELP?

If you are able to, still offer them support. See if you can enlist the help of other family members and friends to create a support network around them.

Keep including your loved one in family activities if possible. Do things with them to keep them engaged and to remind them that they are part of the family.

To help them stay as safe as possible you can also encourage them to:

- not use alone
- not share equipment
- eat at least one healthy meal each day
- drink water and stay hydrated
- have a safe place to sleep or rest
- not drive
- avoid mixing with other drugs
- be safe sex ready
- maintain their general health and hygiene (including having regular check-ups with their GP, sexual health clinic, dentist.)
- stay connected with work, study, sport, interests and friends who don't use drugs.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

It's important for family members to look after themselves when someone is using meth.

- Ensure all other family members are safe, particularly if someone feels vulnerable or if there are children around. In some cases you may need to talk with children to help them understand what is happening.
- Connect with people who can support you. This can include other family members, friends, health professionals and/or family support staff.
- Continue doing those things that bring you pleasure and help you feel connected, strong and healthy. This could include regular catch ups with friends, exercise, hobbies, eating good meals or taking holidays.
- Look forward to the future. Try to maintain a sense of hope. Get support and try to stay positive.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE HELP

- **The Addiction and Mental Health Helpline** provides free, confidential, 24/7 access to support, information and referral. Ph. 1-866-332-2322
- **Smart Recovery Friends and Family** offer online support groups and resources for family and friends impacted by a loved one's substance use. <https://www.smartrecovery.org/family/>
- **Nar-Anon Family Groups** offer in-person and online support groups based on the 12 Step Program. <https://www.naranonedmonton.com/>