

Crystal Methamphetamine

FACT SHEET

Potential long-term effects of crystal methamphetamine use

- ≈ Structural changes to the brain and memory loss
- ≈ Blurred vision
- ≈ Difficulty completing complex tasks
- ≈ Movement disorders and loss of coordination
- ≈ Slowed reaction times to stimuli
- ≈ Mental confusion, hallucinations, delusions, and feelings of paranoia
- ≈ Drug-induced psychosis (hallucinations or false perceptions, e.g. scratching at “bugs” on skin or hearing voices)
- ≈ Brain toxicity, kidney, liver, and/or lung failure, and heart disease



Crystal meth is a stimulant drug also known as *meth, tina, yaba, crystal, jib, speed, crank, ice, sketch, cryssie, or glass*. It is a white, odourless powder that can be snorted, smoked, injected, and eaten. Meth does not occur naturally. It is a synthetic drug that is made from a combination of chemical ingredients. Ingredients might include iodine, hydrochloric acid, drain cleaner, battery acid, lye, antifreeze, pool acid, sodium hydroxide, lithium/sodium metal, red phosphorous, or anhydrous ammonia.

What are the effects of crystal meth on the body?

Crystal meth is a highly psychologically addictive substance. The effects of meth can last about 6-12 hours; after the initial ‘rush’ the user may feel a period of euphoria. However, during this time users often also become agitated which may lead to violence.

Crystal meth affects the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) by increasing levels of alertness, exhilaration, and euphoria. Crystal meth can also suppress hunger and fatigue. Negative side effects include loss of short term memory and severe mood swings involving anxiety, periods of rage, hyperactivity, suicidal tendencies, aggression, cardiac arrhythmia, increased blood pressure, malnutrition, itching, delusions, nausea, and depression. Users may engage in self-destructive behaviours and long-term users may have hallucinations.

At higher doses users can experience paranoia, agitation and violent behavior. Chronic use can lead to ‘meth mouth’ where the user experiences severe tooth decay and tooth loss. Users can also develop a tolerance to the drug so that they have to take increasing amounts to experience the same effects.

Symptoms of withdrawal include strong cravings, irritability, lack of energy, increased appetite, sleep problems, depression, stomach pain, headaches, shortness of breath, mental confusion, restlessness, or tiredness. These symptoms usually appear 24 hours after use and can last up to 48 hours.

If crystal meth is so harmful, why do people use it?

Crystal meth is used socially including for parties or at clubs with friends. Because it reduces hunger some people use it as an aid to dieting. Students may use it to help them stay alert to study since it decreases the perceived need for sleep. Street youth may use meth to help them to survive since it reduces their appetite and desire to sleep. Meth is also popular because it is cheap, readily available, and long-lasting.

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Recent surveys report that 68-73% of street-involved youth in Vancouver have used crystal meth at least once!

A 2005 survey in four B.C. school districts found that up to 8% of students in grades 6-12 reported having tried crystal meth during the school year.

Local Resources

www.no2meth.ca
www.methwatch.ca

BC Nurses Line

(604) 215-4700
1-866-15-4700

BC Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral

(604) 660-9382
1-800-663-1441

Centre for Public Safety and Criminal Justice Research

33844 King Road
Abbotsford, BC
V2S 7M8
604 854-4553
<http://cjr.ufv.ca>

How is crystal meth made?

The production of meth is an easy yet highly dangerous process. Meth is created by heating together chemical ingredients, which creates a serious risk of fire and explosions. Meth can be produced almost anywhere and people living near meth labs can unknowingly be exposed to dangerous toxins, fumes, and hazardous byproducts. Chemical vapours released during the production of meth can be absorbed by wood, fabric, wallboard, and carpeting, contaminating the area with toxic chemicals and residues that remain long after the batch of meth is produced. Each pound of meth produced in a lab can result in as much as 5 pounds of toxic waste which is often dumped into streams, rivers, and sewage systems by meth cooks trying to dispose of evidence of their illegal operations.

How do I know if my child is using meth? What can I do?

Signs that your child may be using meth include changes in their appearance and health, such as weight loss, restlessness, or insomnia. There may be a decrease in their performance at school. They may begin to relate to you differently, with mood swings, avoidance, or sudden violence.

Resources

- Health Canada
<http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/meth-fact-sheet>
- National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
<http://headsup.scholastic.com/articles/methamphetamine-get-the-facts/>
- Vancouver Island Health Authority
http://crystalmethbc.com/viha_teen_talk.pdf
- Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre
<http://keltymentalhealth.ca/>
- Canadian Mental Health Association
<http://www.cmha.ca/>
- Mind Check
<http://mindcheck.ca/>