

# Crystal Meth: What You Should Know

Crystal meth is the common name for crystal methamphetamine, a strong and highly addictive drug that affects the central nervous system. It comes in clear crystal chunks or shiny blue-white rocks. Also called “Ice,” “Glass,” or “Jib” it's a popular party drug. Usually, users smoke crystal meth with a small glass pipe, but they may also swallow it, snort it, or inject it into a vein. People say they have a quick rush of euphoria shortly after using it. But it's dangerous. It can damage your body and cause severe psychological problems.

## Where Does It Come From?

Methamphetamine is a man-made stimulant that's been around for a long time. During World War II, soldiers were given meth to keep them awake. People have also taken the drug to lose weight and ease depression. Today, the only legal meth product is a tablet for treating obesity and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). It's rarely used and is available only by prescription. Crystal meth is made with the ingredient pseudoephedrine, which is found in many cold medicines. It helps ease congestion. Because it's used to make meth, the federal government closely regulates products with this ingredient. Most of the crystal meth used in this country comes from Mexican “superlabs.” But there are many small labs in the U. S. Some are right in people's homes. Making meth is a dangerous process because of the chemicals involved. Along with being toxic, they can cause explosions.

## How Does It Make You Feel?

The powerful rush people get from using meth causes many to get hooked right from the start. When it's used, a chemical called dopamine floods the parts of the brain that regulate feelings of pleasure. Users also feel confident and energetic.

A user can become addicted quickly and soon finds he will do anything to have the rush again. As he continues to use the drug, he builds up a tolerance. That means he needs higher doses to get the same high. The higher the dose, the higher the risks.

## What Are the Effects?

Meth can make a user's body temperature rise so high that they could pass out or even die. A user may feel anxious and confused, be unable to sleep, have mood swings, and become violent. Looks can change dramatically. A user may age quickly. Their skin may dull, and he can develop hard-to-heal sores and pimples. He may have a dry mouth and stained, broken, or rotting teeth. They may become paranoid. They may hear and see things that aren't there. They may think about hurting himself or others. They may also feel as though insects are crawling on or under his skin. A meth user is at higher risk for HIV/AIDS. The drug can affect judgment and lessen inhibitions. Someone under the influence of the drug may be more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as unsafe sex.

## What Are the Signs Someone Is Using Meth? Have you noticed changes in someone you care about? Consider these signs:

- Not caring about personal appearance or grooming
- Obsessively picking at hair or skin
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Dilated pupils and rapid eye movement
- Strange sleeping patterns -- staying up for days or even weeks at a time
- Jerky, erratic movements; twitching; facial tics; animated or exaggerated mannerisms; and constant talking
- Borrowing money often, selling possessions, or stealing
- Angry outbursts or mood swings
- Psychotic behavior, such as paranoia and hallucinations

## How Meth Addiction Is Treated

Meth addiction is one of the hardest drug addictions to treat, but it can be done. If you know someone with the problem, don't try to help them by yourself. Users need a professional counselor or drug treatment program. If you need help you can call: (post secondary students ages 17-25) Good2Talk- 1-866-925-5454, Kids Help Phone- 1-800-668-6868, Addiction, Mental Health, and Problem Gambling Services (ConnexOntario)- 1-866-531-2600, Beendigen Inc (Talk 4 Healing) Distress Line: 1-855-554-HEAL (4325) or Website: <http://www.talk4healing.com/>