

What is harm reduction?

Harm reduction is an approach which aims to reduce the risks when using methamphetamine or other drugs and encourages safer behaviours. Harm reduction recognises that some people will continue to use methamphetamine regardless of the risks. However, there are strategies that can be used to help lower the risk of harm when using methamphetamine.

What is methamphetamine? (Also called meth, ice, crystal, speed, base, goey, fast, whizz, shabu, Tina)

Methamphetamine is a stimulant drug, which means that it increases brain activity and intensifies the messages between the brain and the body (e.g. increases heart rate and breathing). Methamphetamine is commonly smoked, snorted, swallowed or injected.

Methamphetamine - Onset and duration of effects

The onset of effects and duration vary widely depending on purity, dose, route of administration and the individual characteristics of the person. The onset of effects when using methamphetamine usually start within 10 minutes, peak after 2-4 hours and the effects can last between 2-24 hours depending on tolerance and dose.

Half life (e.g. the time it takes for half of a substance to leave the body) Even though the apparent effects of the methamphetamine wear off after approximately 6 hours the drug can remain active in your system for 12 or more hours.

Looking after yourself

It is always safer not to use methamphetamine, however there are strategies that you can use to reduce the harm. Methamphetamine may cause harm to your mental or physical health, relationships, behaviours, finances or ability to work, study or care for people. Here are some strategies that can be used to help lower the risks.

- **Some people are more at risk.** Think carefully before you start using and people under 18, and women who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy, or breastfeeding should not use methamphetamine. People who are at risk of depression, anxiety and psychotic disorders should not use methamphetamine. If there is a past or family history of mental health concerns, or physical health conditions such as heart problems, hypertension or high blood pressure you are more at risk.
- **Start small.** The purity of methamphetamine varies significantly which means that dosage levels can vary. Therefore whether you are using methamphetamine for the first time or using regularly it's always important to start with a small amount, let it reach its peak, and then carefully consider as to whether you'll have more.
- **Set limits.** Setting a limit on when and how much you use can help keep your use under control and reduces your risk of developing dependence. Having breaks also gives your brain and body time to recover and the more you break up the pattern of use, the easier it is to manage your use.
- **Don't mix.** Mixing methamphetamine with over-the-counter/prescribed medications or other drugs increases the risk of harm including overdose. Sticking to one drug reduces the risks as the interactions between methamphetamine and other drugs including prescribed medications can be unpredictable.
- **Don't use alone.** There are risks when using alone. It's always better to be in a safe environment and with people you trust if something does go wrong. It's also important that if anyone becomes unwell to stay with them and don't let them go off alone.
- **Delay.** Try delaying when you first use methamphetamine in your day. It can be helpful to distract yourself e.g., talk to a friend, eat, go for a walk, or complete certain jobs/activities before you use methamphetamine.
- **Be prepared and careful.** Methamphetamine can impact your decision-making and risky things can become more risky. Some common things to plan for can be your transport home to avoid drug driving, having your phone charged with credit, and being prepared for safe sex.

- **Don't drive.** Methamphetamine affects your ability to drive safely (this also includes riding a bike or scooter). It's an offence to have any amount of methamphetamine in your system while you drive or are in charge of a motor vehicle.
- **Monitor your moods and emotions.** Methamphetamine use can impact your mental health and worsen whatever state you are in. Methamphetamine can also increase the risk of developing mental health problems including paranoia, depression, anxiety, and psychosis, particularly if a past or family history of mental health concerns.
- **Safer ways of using.** Injecting methamphetamine can increase the risk of additional harms such as such as blood borne viruses, infections, damage to the circulatory system, and overdose. Never share any equipment and always use new sterile equipment.
- **Stay hydrated and avoid physical activity.** Methamphetamine use increases your heart rate, blood pressure and body temperature and when combined with physical activity it can cause dangerous increases in your body temperature. To reduce the risks make sure that you have regular breaks from physical activity, cool down, drink water and avoid alcohol or energy drinks.
- **Adopt a healthy and balanced and lifestyle.** If you are using methamphetamine remember to stay hydrated, eat well, and sleep. Eat before using, and have healthy foods that are easy to swallow ready and available (such as fruit, soups, yoghurt, smoothies, cereal + milk etc) for after you have used.
- **Caring for yourself.** If you are using methamphetamine it can be helpful to have regular check-ups with your GP to monitor your health. It's also important to find a balance between work, study, play and rest.
- **Caring for others.** Methamphetamine use can affect your children and others around you. Ensure your children remain safe and supervised at all times. Make a plan prior to using and be prepared for the hangover/comedown in advance.

Please Note: Sleeping with a child in the same bed while under the influence of substances can be particularly dangerous.

What help is available?

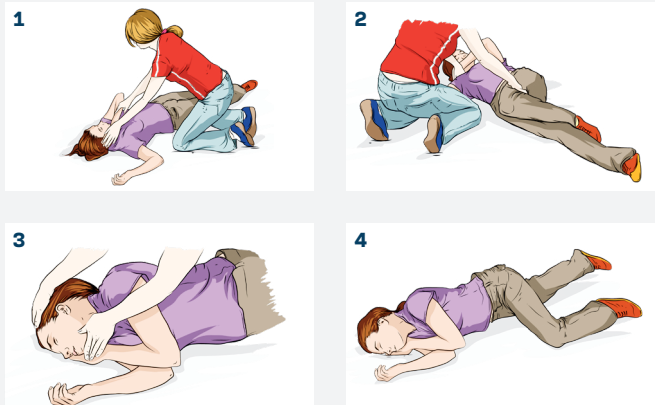
Adis 24/7 Alcohol and Drug Support is a 24 hour, 7 day a week confidential support service for people in Queensland with alcohol and other drug concerns, their families and health professionals.

Talk to us. Anytime, anywhere.
1800 177 833

What should I do in an emergency?

If a person has collapsed or lost consciousness immediately seek assistance by calling an ambulance on **triple zero (000)**.

If they have stopped breathing commence CPR. If they are breathing normally, place them into the recovery position and continue to monitor them until the ambulance arrives.



Disclaimer

This factsheet does not accept, condone or promote the use of methamphetamine or other drugs. While most people who use methamphetamine do not suffer serious harm, the use of any drug, whether legal or not, always carries some risk. No amount of planning and care can ensure that you will have a 'risk free' experience when using methamphetamine and the best way to avoid potential harm is to not use. By developing this factsheet we are not suggesting that methamphetamine use is safe.