



ONICE

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## About this booklet

**Ice, also known as 'crystal meth', is a crystalline form of the drug methamphetamine. This booklet has been designed to provide information on the harms associated with ice use. It is not intended as a self-help guide, nor does it intend to provide advice on whether to use ice or how to use ice. Users of ice are encouraged to seek professional advice about their drug use if they want to cut down or quit using. The issues around drug use and drug-related harms are complex, and although every attempt has been made to provide the most up-to-date information, our understanding of these issues may have changed since this booklet was published. Readers who need specific information on the issues covered in this booklet should seek up-to-date advice from a professional source.**

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Further information on how to seek help for ice use is contained on the back page of this booklet.

**'Ice', or 'crystal meth', is a crystalline form of the drug methamphetamine. Methamphetamine is also sold under the street names 'speed', 'base', 'paste', 'goey', 'shabu' and 'tina'.**

# WHAT IS

# ICE?

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Methamphetamine is a man-made stimulant. It increases chemicals in your brain called monoamines. This is what makes people feel high, more alert, and confident when they are on ice.

Some of the other effects of methamphetamine are physical. It produces an adrenaline-like effect, which makes the heart beat faster and pupils dilate.

Most ice in Australia is imported. However, some ice is made here in Australia. Regardless of whether ice is made here or overseas, it is made in illegal chemical laboratories. It is usually made from pharmaceutical drugs used in cold-and-flu preparations together with other industrial chemicals. Even though the crystalline appearance of ice makes it look pure, ice can still be 'cut' with other chemicals. The residue that is left in the pipe when ice is smoked is from the impurities in the drug.

### **How is it different from speed and base?**

Ice contains the same drug as speed and base, that is, methamphetamine. Ice looks different from speed and base because it is refined so that it turns into crystals.

Speed used to contain amphetamine, but nowadays, it almost always contains methamphetamine. Amphetamine is a chemical cousin of methamphetamine, and both drugs have very similar effects.

The high purity of ice can mean that the side-effects are worse than for speed and base such as more agitation, worse comedowns and high likelihood of addiction.

# ON ICE

**Most people say they use ice because it makes them feel good, and because it gives them more confidence, energy and enthusiasm.**

## **Desired effects**

- euphoria (or high)
- confidence
- alertness
- motivation
- energy

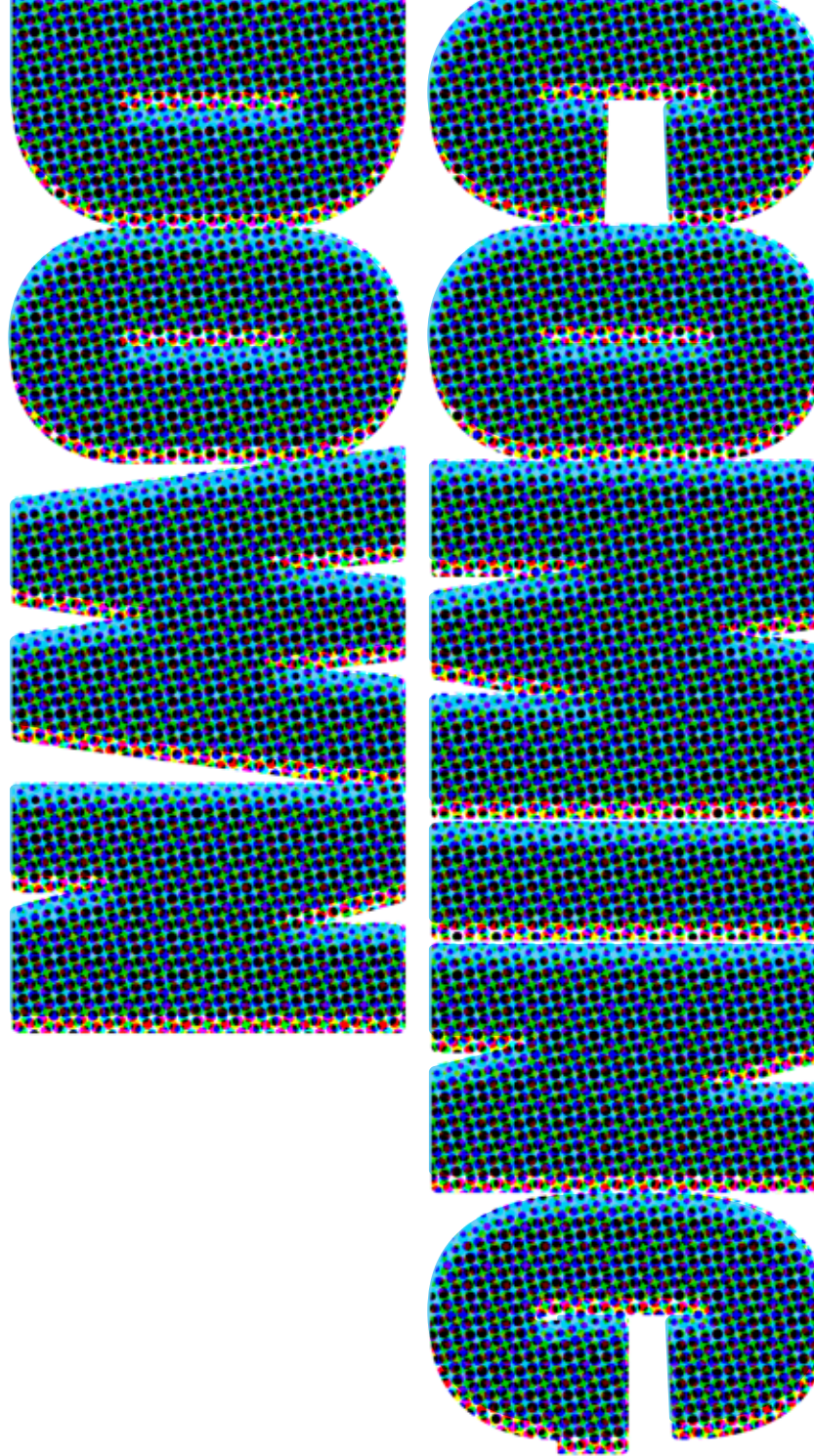
## **Unpleasant effects**

- palpitations and chest pains
- feeling agitated, anxious or irritable
- insomnia
- teeth grinding
- paranoia and hallucinations

## **Signs of intoxication**

- sweaty/clammy skin
- dilated or large pupils
- agitation
- talkativeness

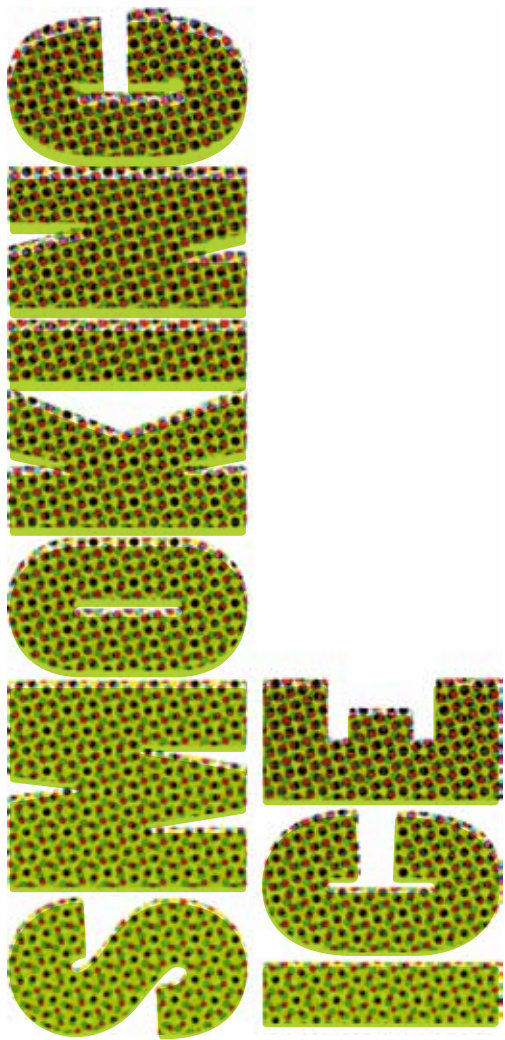
Break-downs in social relationships are one of the common down-sides of using ice for people who take too much of the drug. Arguments over drug use, not having enough money to pay the rent or do other things, and just being pre-occupied with using ice, can all cause relationship problems.



**What ice gives someone today it takes from them tomorrow. While being on ice makes a person feel good, 'coming down' from ice can cause irritability, lethargy and depression.**

The come-down can become really bad when someone uses ice a lot. Not being able to sleep because they feel wired or agitated can also worsen these problems and lead to exhaustion.

Using more ice, or other drugs (like smoking pot), to come down is a bad habit to get into. This is because one drug is merely masking the after-effects of another. This can increase dependence on drugs and it can have unpleasant side effects (like increasing paranoia). The best strategy is to simply rest and to give the body and mind time to recover from using.



... you just feel like you need to have ice to function. And I couldn't get out of bed without a smoke of ice. And my life revolved around this pipe. I'd clean it, and I'd go crazy if someone touched it. ... And the come-downs were just disgusting, the paranoia, hearing things, delusional state ...just thinking about where my next hit of ice was going to come from.



#### What problems can people get from smoking ice?

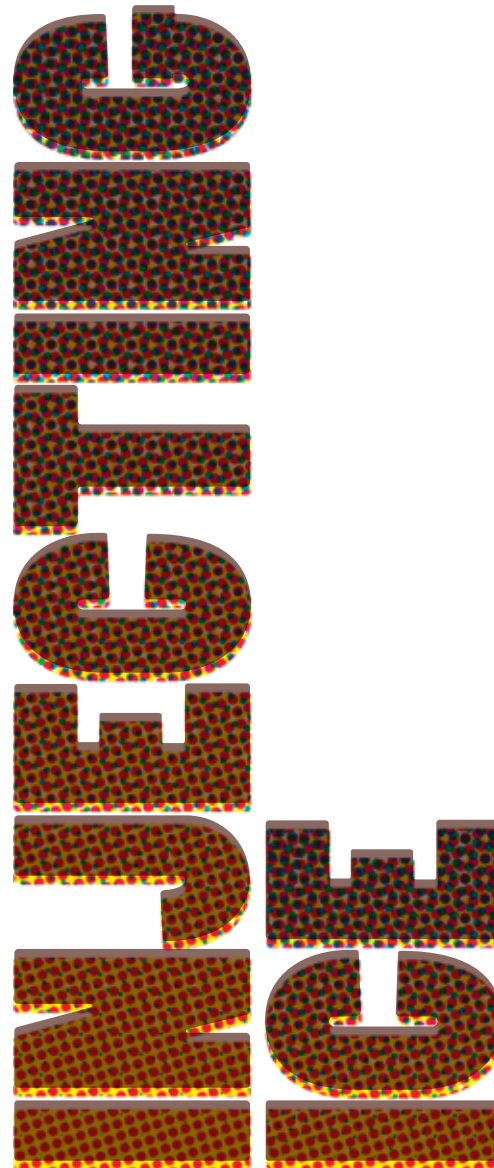
Smoking ice can lead to the same problems people get when using any form of methamphetamine, like speed or base. These include becoming addicted to the drug, feeling paranoid and depressed, and having social and financial problems if they use too much.

Smoking ice can damage lung tissue. In rare cases it can cause a build-up of fluid in the lungs. This is a serious problem which happens because of the pressure that ice puts on the heart. The impurities in ice can also cause bleeding in the lungs.

Smoking ice is more addictive than most other forms of recreational drug use. This is because smoking is a very efficient way to take methamphetamine.

When ice is heated, the crystals of ice melt and then vapourise. When the vapours are inhaled they get absorbed inside the lungs and the methamphetamine goes straight into the bloodstream. This is why the effects come on so fast.

When a person is smoking ice with friends it can be difficult to know exactly how much they have used. Some people can also find it difficult to refuse a pipe that is handed around in a group situation. Getting impatient when the pipe comes around is a sign of craving the drug.



Some people say they inject ice because they don't have to use as much and so it costs less. But the truth is people who inject end up using a lot more. Injecting is the most addictive way to take ice. A person can also end up in poor health if they inject ice because they can get infections from using needles.

#### Infections from injecting

Injecting any drug, including ice, can lead to infections like abscesses around the area where the drug is injected. Injecting any non-sterile solution (including tap water) puts a person at risk of serious infections, including some that can cause problems with the heart. This is because when you inject you by-pass the body's natural defense system for germs. In order to reduce the possibility of infections:

- Always clean the injection site with alcohol swabs
- Always use purified water
- Make sure that any infections are treated, because they can become nasty, and can even be fatal, if they are ignored

#### Thrombosis

Thrombosis is when your vein gets blocked. This can happen because of the impurities in the drugs you inject, such as the chalking agents or oils. These can coagulate in your veins and cause blood clots.

Ice should easily dissolve in water. If your methamphetamine does not dissolve, this is probably because of impurities or oils. These could cause thrombosis.

The symptoms of thrombosis are pain, warmth, swelling and redness around the area where the vein is blocked. The limb usually feels heavy, and someone with thrombosis may get chills or a fever. Thrombosis is serious. If you think someone has thrombosis you should encourage them to see a doctor.

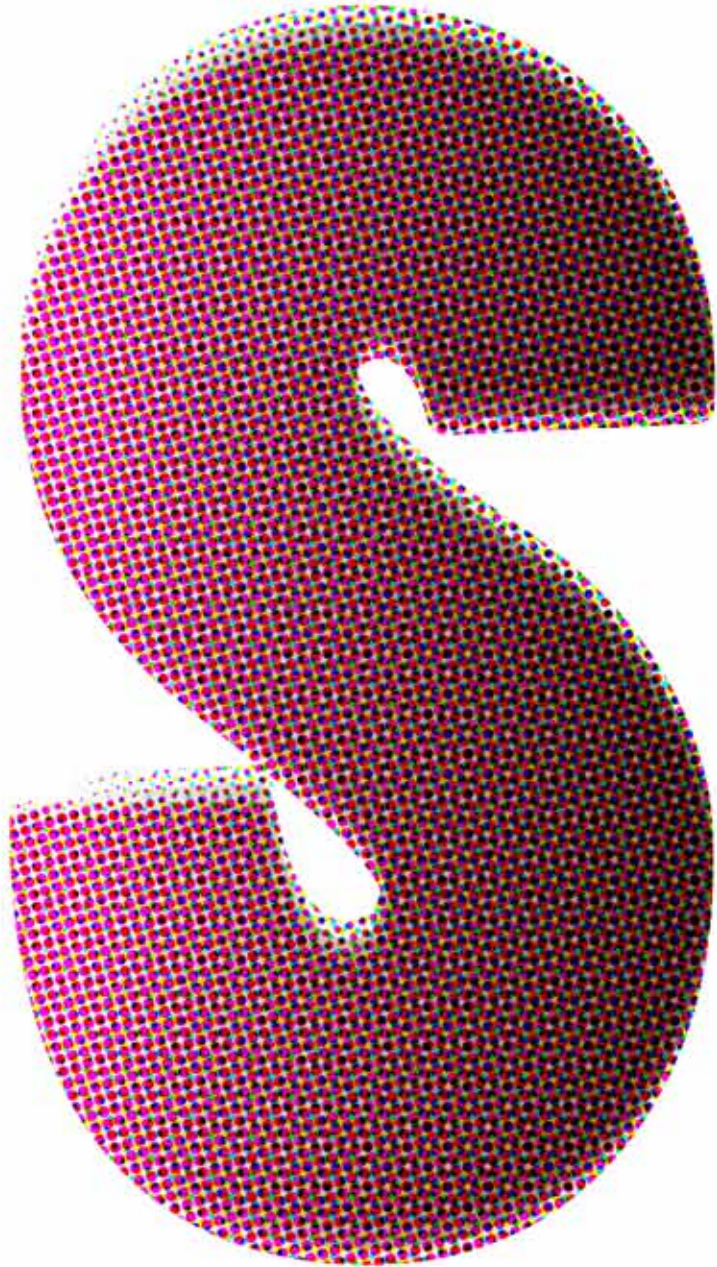
#### Injecting and hepatitis C

Ice injectors are at risk of getting hepatitis C or other blood borne viruses (hepatitis B and HIV). Over half of the injecting drug users in Australia have hepatitis C. HIV is not as common among injecting drug users in Australia (less than 3% of injecting drug users have HIV), but injectors should still be careful. Always using clean needles can not only reduce the chance of getting hepatitis and HIV, but other infections too, which can be transmitted by sharing injecting equipment.

**Ice can increase libido, so, it is important to remember safe-sex practices.**

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), such as chlamydia, are on the rise in Australia. STIs can be even more common among people who use drugs. Having an STI increases your risk of getting HIV or other sexually transmitted infections.

Hepatitis can also be transmitted sexually. Although hepatitis C is much easier to get from sharing needles, it is still possible to get it from having sex with someone who is infected.



**Ice – like all strong stimulant drugs – can cause paranoia and hallucinations in some people. This is called methamphetamine psychosis.**

# ICE PSYCHOSIS – FEELING PARANOID

## **What is methamphetamine psychosis?**

Methamphetamine psychosis usually lasts only while someone is on ice, or coming down. It is most likely to occur if they have used a lot of ice at once, or have been using heavily.

If the psychosis lasts more than a few days after a person stops using, this could indicate that they have a longer-term psychosis, like schizophrenia. You should encourage them to talk to their doctor about how to get help for this.

## **What are the signs and symptoms of psychosis?**

The most common symptoms of methamphetamine psychosis are:

- hearing or seeing things that aren't there
- paranoia – feeling like people are watching you, following you or that people are 'out to get you'
- strange thoughts like thinking other people can hear your thoughts.

- Some people feel bugs crawling on them or under their skin, or they smell things that aren't there (like smelling ice when there is none around). These experiences are also hallucinations.
- When people experience psychosis their thoughts can become muddled and they can become incoherent.

## **What are the warning signs?**

Mild symptoms of psychosis are a warning sign to take a break from using, and get some rest, before things get out of control. Some of the things people experience are:

- shadows or lights moving in the corner of their eye when nothing is there
- illusions, where objects start moving or changing shape
- hearing someone calling their name when no one is around or hearing their phone ring when it didn't
- feeling really self-conscious in public for no reason
- thinking that small insignificant things are threatening
- Sometimes people are not sure whether what they are experiencing is real. In these situations it is good to tell a friend about it, and see what they think is going on.

## **Are you at risk?**

Even people who have no known history of mental health problems can experience paranoia and hallucinations after using ice. The risk increases the more often someone uses ice and if they take a lot of ice at once.

While even using ice occasionally can increase the risk of psychosis, the risk is much greater if a person becomes dependent on ice. (See 'Addicted to Ice' to find out more about dependence.)

A person is more likely to experience psychosis if they have had hallucinations or paranoia before, or if they have a family history of schizophrenia or mania (bipolar disorder).

## **What to do if you experience psychosis?**

The best way to stop paranoia or hallucinations from ice is to:

**stop using** – continuing to use ice will make the psychosis worse

**rest** – sleep will help restore a sense of normality

**seek help** – once someone has had psychosis they are likely to get it again if they keep using ice, so they should cut back on their ice use. More information on where to seek help is located on the back page of this booklet.

## **Medication**

Doctors can prescribe sedative drugs (sleeping pills) to help ice users calm down if they have methamphetamine psychosis. If the psychosis is bad they may prescribe anti-psychotic medications. These medications can have serious side-effects and they need to be prescribed and monitored by a doctor.

*Remember: what you tell the doctor is confidential, so if you know someone who needs help, encourage them to find a doctor they trust, and talk to them about what has happened.*

## **What to do if a friend gets ice psychosis**

Try to be calm and supportive and give them peace and quiet. When they are feeling better, talk to them about what happened. Re-assure them that they are okay, and encourage them to seek help.

If someone becomes aggressive when they are experiencing psychosis, do not disagree with them or confront them, and keep a safe distance from them. They may not understand that you are trying to help them.

See 'Aggression and Ice' for tips on managing aggression.

# AGGRESSION



**The relationship between ice use and aggression is not straight forward. There are lots of reasons why people can become aggressive, and ice is one factor among many.**

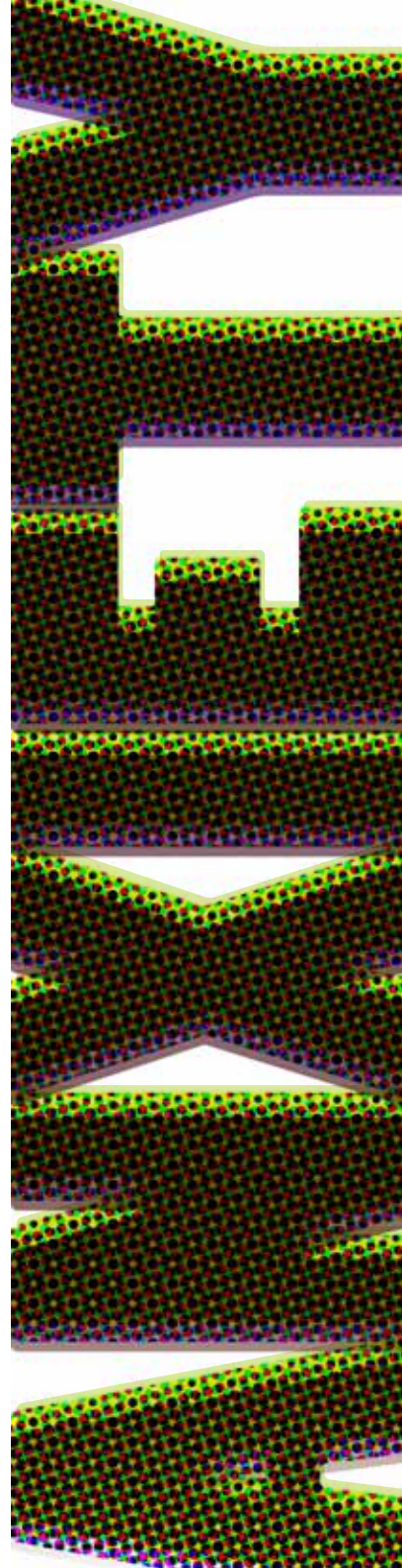
Ice can make you seem more aggressive because it makes you feel invincible and overly confident. If you are feeling paranoid, you might think other people are giving you a hard time, and this can cause fights. Like all drugs (and alcohol), being high on ice can make you more impulsive, so you are more likely to lash out at people without thinking.

#### **What can you do?**

If someone has been in fights before, they should try to avoid using ice as they may end up in similar situations, and it is best to avoid any confrontations. They should also try to avoid drinking alcohol when on ice as this can increase aggression. Not having eaten or slept can make a person feel irritable too, so having something to eat and getting some sleep can help.

If someone around you becomes agitated or angry, keep a calm voice and do not argue with them. Minimise direct eye contact, and maintain a non-confrontational posture, and keep a safe distance. Try to provide them with a quiet environment away from noise and other distractions.

Do not approach someone who is breaking furniture, throwing things or threatening to hurt you. If you are worried that someone will get hurt you should call emergency services by dialing '000'.



**Some people use ice to overcome their anxiety in social situations. While ice can make a person feel more confident in these situations it can also make their anxiety worse.**

Panic attacks are when people suddenly feel very afraid or anxious for no reason. Ice can trigger or worsen attacks because it mimics the symptoms of anxiety, like making the heart pound.

To help cope with a panic attack a person should:

- try to breathe slowly – lengthen out your breath
- breathe in and out of a paper bag (or you can achieve the same effect by cupping your hands over your mouth and breathing into your hands)
- sit down, and if possible, go somewhere quiet

# OVERSOLD

**People who use a lot of ice, or have been using for a long time, feel depressed and lethargic for a few weeks after they stop using. This is because their brain has adapted to ice and needs time to come back to normal.**

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Some people may have had problems with depression before they started using ice. Ice can reduce the feelings of depression at first, but it can make the depression worse in the long run. This can become a vicious cycle where someone keeps using ice to alleviate depression, and then becomes dependent on the drug.

Symptoms of depression can vary from feeling a bit down for a day or two, to long periods of feeling lethargic and disinterested. If someone feels really down for a longer period of time (e.g., a couple of weeks or more), loses interest in things they normally enjoy, or they feel like life isn't worth living anymore, they should talk to a GP about how they are feeling.

If you want to find out more about depression or anxiety, and the type of help you can get, visit the beyond blue website: [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au), youth beyond blue website: <http://www.youthbeyondblue.com> or the headspace website: [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

## SOCIAL ISSUES

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Ironically, break-downs in social relationships are one of the common down-sides of using ice. Ice can make people over-confident and 'cocky' and this can damage relationships with friends and family. Arguments over drug use, not having enough money to pay the rent or do other things, and just being pre-occupied with using ice, can all cause relationship problems.

“  
...I'd rather just say it was fun, and it was party, party, party, but eventually we all started getting really screwed up, psychologically and emotionally, and we just, we couldn't trust each other. That was due to the paranoia and head-fucking going on with everyone, and you couldn't trust your friends, and felt like you were all alone.  
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## LEGAL ISSUES

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Some people start selling ice to their friends to make money, but often they end up using more ice, and not making much money. Then they have to live with all the hassles of the dealing lifestyle, like being hooked up with criminals, and being busted and sent to prison.

“  
I was almost nineteen by that time. And it was a big wake up call, I didn't get bail, I ended up in jail for two weeks. ... I had to run because I owed some guy twelve thousand dollars. ... I was always looking over my shoulder, because you know I was like 'oh my God what happens if he runs into me' or whatever.  
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**Ice puts a lot of stress on the body. Ice stops people feeling hungry or thirsty and it stops them from being able to sleep. This is why people who use ice can lose weight, and become dehydrated and malnourished. They can end up looking gaunt and unhealthy. Ice can increase your risk of dental problems, heart problems, kidney problems and stroke.**

# PHYSICAL EFFECTS

## Teeth

Using ice a lot can also cause jaw clenching and teeth grinding. This is called 'bruxing' and it can wear away tooth enamel and increase tooth sensitivity. Sometimes it can crack teeth. Bruxing can also be from other things, like stress. Ice users can also get tooth decay when they are using ice. This is because ice dries your mouth out, but it is also related to poor dental hygiene and a run-down immune system (eg, because people may not eat properly when they are using ice).

Ice users should make sure they maintain good dental hygiene by brushing their teeth regularly, using a mouthwash and having regular dental check-ups. A dentist can treat gingivitis and give tips on how to manage bruxing.

## Kidneys

Using ice puts strain on the kidneys and can be associated with kidney failure. The following things increase the risk of kidney problems:

- dehydration from not drinking enough water
- not eating, particularly when you are on ice
- exhaustion from excessive physical activity
- not sleeping
- drinking alcohol and using other stimulant drugs (e.g., cocaine or ecstasy) at the same time as ice
- injecting drugs, because this can cause kidney infections

## Heart attack

Because ice is a stimulant drug, if a person uses too much it can interfere with the heart beat and this can cause sudden and unexpected heart failure. Ice can also cause the major artery from the heart to rupture. These problems are rare but can be fatal.

Ice triggers the body's natural 'stress' chemicals, and over time this can weaken and scar the heart muscle and increase the risk of chronic heart disease (i.e., coronary artery disease).

## Stroke

Stroke is not common among ice users, but using ice increases the risk of stroke. Strokes are caused when blood vessels in the brain get blocked, and this can damage the brain.

## Brain

Using ice affects the way that the chemicals in the brain work and can also damage the nerve cells in the brain. These changes in the brain can cause depression and paranoia, mood swings, irritability and poor memory and concentration.

These problems can also be related to lack of sleep, not eating enough, or feeling stressed or anxious, particularly when someone is coming down from ice or going through withdrawal.

Most of the evidence suggests that nerves in the brain can recover and compensate within a few months after stopping use.

## What happens if you use ice while you're pregnant?

Using ice during pregnancy can reduce the blood supply to the unborn baby and also reduce the nutrients that the baby needs to develop. This can result in a premature birth or an underweight baby.

# ADDICTED TO ICE

Ice is an addictive drug, and whether a person becomes addicted is related to how often they use, how much they use, how they take the drug (smoking and injecting are the most addictive ways to take ice), as well as their personal situation.

Addiction, or dependence, on ice is not 'all or nothing'. It creeps up on people. Some of the warning signs are:

- craving ice
- needing more ice to get high
- come-downs that last for days, with intense depression, lethargy and irritability
- using ice or other drugs to cope with coming down
- finding it hard to use less, or go without using
- using ice even when it is causing problems, like depression or paranoia

## Why do you get addicted to ice?

Ice releases chemicals into the brain, called monoamines (dopamine, serotonin and noradrenalin). It is these chemicals that make a person feel high when they are on ice.

After taking the drug for a while the brain will adapt to ice, and will only function 'normally' when a person is taking the drug.

When someone stops using ice, the body has to re-adapt to not having ice. This causes withdrawal symptoms. Withdrawal is the period of readjustment, where the body 'learns' to work normally again without the drug.

# TAKING A BREAK

## What will happen to someone when they stop using ice?

If someone is using ice a lot, they will get some withdrawal symptoms when they stop using. This can feel pretty bad for the first few days, but problems should start to go away within a couple of weeks. The types of things to expect are listed below.

Time since last use	Common Symptoms of Withdrawal
<b>Day 1 – 3</b> (comedown)	exhaustion increased sleep depression decreased appetite restlessness irritability
<b>Day 2 – 10</b> (withdrawal)	strong urges (cravings) to use ice mood swings, alternating between feeling irritable, stressed, agitated, restless and anxious, to feeling tired, lacking energy and generally run down very disturbed sleep poor concentration (feeling scattered) general aches, pains and stiffness headaches increased appetite strange thoughts, such as feeling paranoid misunderstanding things, such as seeing things that aren't really there easily upset
<b>Day 7 – 28</b> (symptoms start to settle down, although some still occur)	mood swings, alternating between feeling anxious, irritable or agitated, to feeling flat, a bit depressed and run down disturbed sleep cravings for ice or other stimulant drugs feeling bored increased appetite
<b>1 to 3 months</b>	return of normal sleep, mood and activity levels major improvements in general health and mood

'Cravings' are when a person feels the urge to use ice. Someone may get cravings long after they have stopped using ice. Everyone gets cravings for things that they like. But with ice, sometimes cravings are so strong that it is hard for someone not to use even when they know they really shouldn't.

### Remember:

- cravings are only really severe for short periods of time
- cravings will eventually go away if you don't give in to them

It is really important for a person to get to know their cravings so they can cope with them when they don't want to use. Different people have different ways of coping.

### How to cope with cravings:

**DELAY** the decision as to whether to use for one hour.

**DISTRACT** find some other activity to do during this hour.

**DECIDE** whether it's worth using after the hour is up.

When a person gets cravings, they should make a deal with themselves to wait an hour before they decide to use. They should also distract themselves from the cravings by thinking about something else – like listening to their favourite CD or going for a walk. At the end of the hour, they should think about the reasons they want to stop using, before deciding whether or not to use.

“...every day I want to use. It's one of those things like when I do use, I regret using in a sense. Like there's not a day where I don't think about having a hit and you know I'm able to say to myself that I'm not going to do it today. And sometimes I'll say that every day for two weeks.”

# CRAVINGS

### What to do when you give in to the craving:

Learning to not use ice is like changing any habit. A person is bound to slip up along the way – it's normal.

- Slip-ups are not failures. They don't mean a person has lost control. They just need to try again, and use the experience to work out how to cope better next time.
- When someone has a slip-up, take some time to think about why.
- What happened just before the slip?
- How could they have avoided the slip, in hindsight?
- What will they do next time in a similar situation?

### Medications for ice addiction

There are currently no approved medications for treating ice addiction. Several medications have been trialed, but none have been proven to be safe and effective.

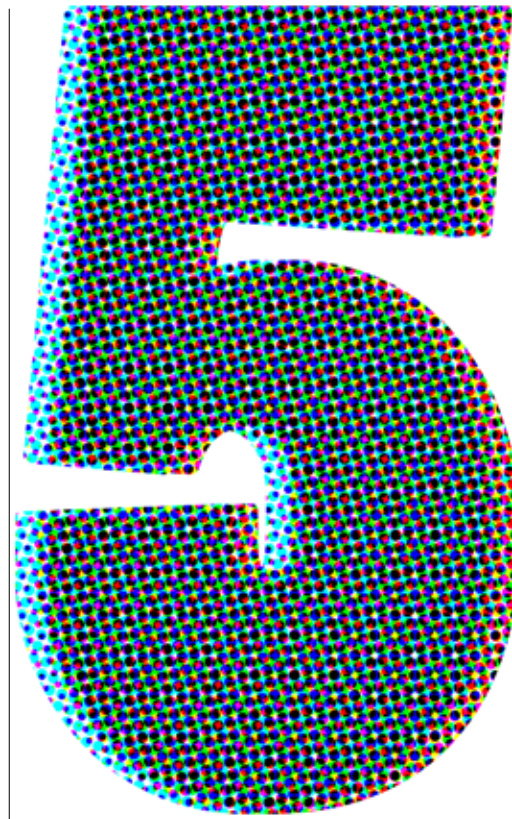
# GETTING MORE

# HELP

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There are lots of options available to get help for ice use, including counselors, psychologists, and specialist drug treatment services. These services can help people manage their ice use, and they can also help out with other things that are going on in their life. They can even offer support for family and friends.

To find out what's available in your area you can call the information services listed on the back of this brochure. You can also talk to your GP about options, or explore the internet for online help and information.  
(see [www.meth.org.au](http://www.meth.org.au))



## STEPS TO SAFER USE

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If someone chooses to continue to use ice, the tips below may reduce any problems they experience from their ice use.

- 1. Snort or Swallow.** Avoid injecting and smoking ice – they are far more addictive ways to take the drug, and they increase the risk of health problems.
- 2. Always have safe sex,** and if you are going to inject, use clean needles, swabs and sterile water.
- 3. Frequent use will get a person into trouble.** Any use is a risk, but the risks increase greatly if someone uses weekly or more often.
- 4. Eat well and drink plenty of fluids** when they are not using. Ice reduces the appetite and thirst and this can lead to malnutrition.
- 5. Rest and recuperate.** Take regular breaks from using to give your body and mind time to recover.

# INFORMATION OR

<b>NSW</b>	<b>Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)</b>	
	(02) 9361 8000	1 800 422 599 (toll free)
	<b>NSW Users and Aids Association (NUAA)</b>	(02) 8354 7300
		1 800 644 413 (toll free)
<b>Victoria</b>	<b>Directline</b>	1 800 888 236 (toll free)
	<b>Victorian Drug User Group/VIVAIDS</b>	(03) 9329 1500
<b>South Australia</b>	<b>Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)</b>	
	1 300 13 13 40	(08) 8363 8618
	<b>SAVIVE</b>	(08) 8334 1699
<b>West Australia</b>	<b>Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)</b>	
	(08) 9442 5000	1 800 198 024 (toll free) (only from WA rural area's)
	<b>WA Substance Users Association (WASUA)</b>	(08) 9321 2877
	<b>Parent Drug Information Service</b>	(08) 9442 5050
		1 800 663 203 (toll free)
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)</b>	
	(07) 3837 5989	1 800 177 833 (toll free)
	<b>Queensland Injectors Health Network</b>	
	(07) 3620 8111 (Brisbane)	1 800 172 076 (toll free)
	(07) 5443 9576 (Sunshine Coast)	
	(07) 4051 4742 (Cairns)	
	(07) 5520 7900 (Gold Coast)	
<b>Tasmania</b>	<b>Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)</b>	
		1 800 811 994 (toll free)
	<b>Alcohol and Drug Service</b>	
	(03) 6336 5577 (North: Launceston)	
	(03) 6429 8555 (North West: Ulverstone Office)	
	(South: Hobart) (03) 6230 7901	
	<b>Tasmanian Council on AIDS, Hepatitis, Related Diseases (TASCAHRD)</b>	
	(03) 6234 1242	1 800 005 900 (toll free)
<b>Northern Territory</b>	<b>Amity House</b>	
	(08) 8944 6565	
	1 800 629 683 (toll free) (Gambling Help Territory Wide)	
	1 800 684 372 (Amity Territory Wide – including D&A)	
	<b>Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council</b>	
	(08) 8941 1711 (Darwin)	1 800 880 899 (toll free) (Darwin)
	(08) 8953 3172 (Alice Springs)	
	(08) 8931 3676 (Palmerston)	
<b>ACT</b>	<b>ACT Community Health</b>	
	(02) 6205 4545	
	<b>Australian IV League</b>	(02) 6279 1600

'On ice' and the 'User's guide to speed' can be obtained from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre <http://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au> <http://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au>

**For more information or help please contact the following agencies:**

