

Amphetamines / Methamphetamine

Amphetamines such as methamphetamine (ice and speed) belong to a group of drugs called stimulants. They work by speeding up the messages between the brain and the body. Their appearance can vary from powder, which can range in colour from white to brown, to an oily paste, or white or clear crystals.

Other names

Speed, whiz, goey, uppers, fast, louee, up.

Crystal methamphetamine is also known as ice, shabu, crystal or glass.

The Effects

If methamphetamine is injected or smoked the effects may be felt immediately. If methamphetamine is snorted or swallowed it can take up to 30 minutes to feel the effects.

Ice is much stronger than other amphetamines and has a more potent effect that lasts for longer and produces a worse comedown.

The effects may include

- Happiness and confidence
- Talking more and feeling energetic
- Repeating simple things like itching and scratching
- Large pupils and dry mouth
- Fast heart beat and breathing
- Teeth grinding, jaw clenching
- Reduced appetite
- Excessive sweating
- Increased sex drive

Low to moderate doses

Effects may include:

- Feelings of euphoria and confidence
- Increased alertness
- Feeling more awake, less need for sleep
- Increased talkativeness
- Nervousness, anxiety, agitation
- Hallucinations
- Paranoia

Higher doses

Effects can include:

- Tremors
- Irregular breathing
- Rapid pounding heart beat
- Violent or aggressive behaviour

- Collapse, seizure, stroke, heart attack

Long term effects

These can include:

- Tension, anxiety and depression
- Paranoia,
- Violence
- Breathlessness
- Malnutrition and rapid weight loss
- Chronic sleep problems
- Cracked teeth and dental problems from grinding and jaw clenching
- High blood pressure, rapid irregular heartbeat
- Increased risk of stroke
- Tolerance and Dependence

Regular heavy use of ice and speed can cause 'amphetamine psychosis' which can include paranoid delusions, hallucinations, and bizarre aggressive and violent behaviour. These symptoms usually disappear a few days after the person stops using methamphetamine.

Coming down

As the effect of the methamphetamine begins to wear off, you may experience a range of symptoms which can last for several days and may include:

- Lethargy, total exhaustion
- Increased appetite
- Feeling restless, irritable and anxious
- Tension, radical mood swings
- Aggression that may lead to violence
- Depression
- Paranoia

Preventing and Reducing Harm

Injecting

Injecting methamphetamine may cause:

- vein and skin damage, abscesses and ulcers
- becoming dependent
- damage to heart, lungs, liver and brain,
- infections such as tetanus, tuberculosis, Hepatitis B and C and HIV/AIDS
- stroke

Sharing equipment such as needles and syringes greatly increases the risk of contracting blood borne viruses such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV.

It is safest not to inject drugs. However, if you choose to inject you should always use new clean equipment. The National Drug and Alcohol Hotline [1800 250 015](tel:1800250015) can provide information on where to obtain clean needles and syringes in your state and territory.

Legal Issues

It is illegal to possess, use, supply, manufacture or sell amphetamines in Australia or to help someone else to do these things. Supply includes giving amphetamines to a friend. Penalties can differ in different states and territories but include heavy fines and imprisonment. The exception is if amphetamines were prescribed for you by a doctor for a medical condition and you are using them in the way that the doctor advised.

It is also illegal to drive while under the influence of amphetamines. Police may conduct random drug tests and if the test shows any amphetamines in your system you will be charged. Penalties may include heavy fines, imprisonment and loss of your driving license.

In some states and territories, it is illegal to possess, sell, or purchase equipment such as ice pipes.