What is methamphetamine?

Methamphetamine comes in three main forms:

- **Ice/Crystal meth** - Translucent crystals, sometimes shards
- **Base** - White to brown, thick oily substance
- **Speed** - White or off-white powder

All forms of methamphetamine can be ‘cut’ (mixed) with other substances, which reduce the purity. Sometimes these other substances can also be harmful. Methamphetamine is often contained in pills sold as MDMA/ecstasy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Also known as</th>
<th>Potency</th>
<th>Mainly used by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ice/Crystal meth</td>
<td>Shabu, Shabs, Tina, glass, meth, crystal</td>
<td>Medium to high; this is normally the most potent form</td>
<td>Smoking, injecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td>Pure, point, wax, meth</td>
<td>Medium to high</td>
<td>Swallowing, injecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>Go-ey, meth</td>
<td>Low to medium</td>
<td>Snorting, swallowing, injecting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ice or crystal usually have higher purity than speed, and for this reason it gives a stronger “high” and lasts longer. It also has stronger side effects while using and in the ‘comedown’ or ‘crash’ phase. There is greater potential for methamphetamine users to become dependent (addiction), develop psychosis, and suffer from long-term physical and mental health problems.

Personal Stories

“...ice was always viewed as the most extreme drug, and something that almost all my peers would not touch. However, the rare few did, and they completely changed as a person.”

How many young people have tried it?

According to the 2017 Australian secondary schools’ survey, 1 in 50 students (2%) aged 12-17 used amphetamines last year.
Is "Ice" use increasing in Australia?
Survey research suggests that methamphetamine use in Australia has not risen significantly in recent years. In fact, usage has been relatively stable since 2007. However, trend data suggests an increase in ice use among users, compared to other forms such as powder or base.

Are harms from "Ice" use increasing in Australia?
While rates of use remain stable, the harms from ice use (e.g. deaths, hospital admissions for dependence and psychosis) have increased.

What are the effects?
Methamphetamine takes effect quickly. The effects can last between 4 and 12 hours, although it can take 1 to 2 days for the drug to completely leave the body.

Methamphetamine is a very unpredictable drug. Toxic (and sometimes fatal) reactions can occur regardless of the amount used. This can happen whether the person is a first-time, occasional or regular user. Methamphetamine is more addictive than most other drugs, especially when taken in crystal form.

Effects of methamphetamine vary, but may include:

**Immediate**
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Enlarged pupils
- Increased energy
- Feeling of euphoria (a ‘high’)
- Aggressive behaviour
- Trembling
- Bad headaches and dizziness
- A ‘comedown’ (see glossary)
- Insomnia
- Stomach cramps
- Reduced appetite
- Blurred vision
- Anxiety and panic attacks.

**Long Term**
- Dependence (addiction)
- Dental problems
- Heart, kidney and lung problems
- Malnutrition and exhaustion
- Depression
- If injected there is an increased risk of infections like Hepatitis C and HIV
- Paranoia (feeling extremely suspicious and frightened)
- Psychosis (see glossary)
- Stroke.
Evidence Base

This factsheet was developed following expert review by researchers at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, The University of Sydney, and the National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW.

For more information about methamphetamine use in Australia and how to get help, visit http://cracksintheice.org.au/.

See detailed attachment for a list of sources for this information.

• Credit to 2&2 for the 'Avoiding Drugs?' infographic.

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