



# KNOW THE FACTS ABOUT CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE

**EXTREMELY ADDICTIVE.  
EXTREMELY DANGEROUS.**

**The short-term effects are unpredictable;  
the long-term damaging effects can be  
permanent or fatal.**

## WHAT IS CRYSTAL METH?

Crystal Methamphetamine (also called ice, crystal, jib, crystal meth, chalk or speed) is part of a family of drugs known as amphetamines. It is a synthetic (human-made) drug that is not legal in any form in Canada.

It can be snorted or injected from a powder, swallowed in a tablet form or smoked from crystals. The way it is taken can affect how quickly the drug works, but the side effects of all forms are dangerous.

## WHAT IS METH MADE FROM?

Crystal methamphetamine, or “crystal meth”, is made using common household ingredients that are cooked together. The process of cooking crystal meth is very dangerous and produces many toxic chemicals. The main ingredients are ephedrine and pseudo-ephedrine, which are found in cold medicines.

**Crystal meth can also contain battery acid, drain cleaner, paint thinner and antifreeze.**

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF USING METH?

Meth is extremely addictive and very dangerous. Once addicted, it is very difficult to stop using crystal meth. Suddenly stopping the drug can cause severe cravings, as well as feelings of being anxious, depressed and tired. Other withdrawal symptoms include feeling hungry, stomach pain, headache and shortness of breath.

People who use crystal meth are more likely to make risky decisions such as having unprotected sex or sharing needles with other people. This exposes them to diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SOMEONE USING METH?

The short term effects of crystal meth can be dangerous and unpredictable. People who take crystal meth are often restless and seem to have a lot of energy. It can make them feel very awake and alert, even if they have not slept. They talk very fast and their minds race with thoughts and ideas. The drug can also cause dryness in the mouth, headaches or dizziness, stomachaches, muscle spasms, difficulty breathing, raised blood pressure, an irregular or fast heartbeat, a rise in body temperature (hyperthermia) and fainting. Some people also experience paranoia and hallucinations, causing them to act aggressively or become suddenly violent.

Crystal meth can also cause issues with money, damage relationships with friends and family, or lead to problems with the law.

► **Crystal meth use can make it feel like bugs are crawling under the skin.  
This may lead to the person picking at their skin, causing sores.**

## WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS?

One of the most common side effects of long term crystal meth use is called “meth mouth”. Because the drug decreases the amount of saliva in the mouth, bacteria are able to grow quickly, staining the teeth black and causing cavities. People who use crystal meth often have no appetite, so over time they suffer from poor nutrition and weight loss. They are at a high risk of heart disease or attack, stroke, convulsions and Parkinson’s disease.

▶ Long-term use of crystal meth can cause long lasting damage to the areas of the brain responsible for memory and emotion.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF USING CRYSTAL METH WHEN PREGNANT?

The effects of crystal meth on pregnant women are not very well understood, but there is evidence that it can lead to premature birth. Babies born to mothers that used crystal meth during pregnancy are often undersized, are not as active as other babies, and can have heart and brain problems.

## DOES CRYSTAL METH INCREASE RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOR?

The use of crystal meth is associated with more frequent sexual activity, sex with more partners and an increased risk of unprotected sex. All of these increase the risk of sexually transmitted and blood borne infections such as HIV and hepatitis C.

In Saskatchewan, an increase in crystal meth injection has been reported which may increase needle sharing. Harm reduction programs reduce transmission of blood-borne infections and other harms by providing supplies for injecting drugs and safer sex. It is important for people who use, or are considering using, crystal meth to have information about harm reduction tips and locations of harm reduction programs.

## WHY ARE YOU GIVING THIS INFORMATION NOW?

Saskatchewan is experiencing an increase in the use of crystal methamphetamine. It is important for people to know the risks associated with crystal meth use, to be able to identify signs of use in their loved ones, and to know that recovery is possible and help is available.

## IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW NEEDS HELP:

Contact your local Addictions/Mental Health Services office, doctor or other health care provider if you need more information.

To locate services near you:

- Visit [saskatchewan.ca/addictions](http://saskatchewan.ca/addictions).
- Visit HealthLine Online at [healthlineonline.ca](http://healthlineonline.ca).
- Call HealthLine at 811. Trained staff are available to provide mental health and addictions crisis support, in a safe and confidential manner.



[saskatchewan.ca/addictions](http://saskatchewan.ca/addictions)

