

METHAMPHETAMINE

DON'T LET METH TAKE HOLD



Methamphetamine is an addictive drug that comes in liquid, powder, paste, pill, or crystal forms.

How does methamphetamine affect the body?

Methamphetamine produces desired and undesired effects. The initial effects last for 2 – 12 hours (depending on how much is consumed) but it can take days for the drug to leave the body.

The short-term undesired or harmful effects include:

- dry mouth and reduced appetite
- increased heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing
- increased pupil size and blurred vision
- irritability and restlessness.

The longer-term undesired or harmful effects include:

- changes to brain function, which may be permanent
- dependence
- mood swings that can affect daily life
- depression
- poorer concentration and memory
- sleep problems
- psychosis – hearing voices, imagining things, hallucinations, and delusions (false beliefs)
- increased risk of stroke
- movement problems and increased risk of Parkinson's disease.

Some people who use methamphetamine on a regular basis may also experience heart, lung, and kidney problems, malnutrition, dental problems, skin problems, and increased risk of infection. People who use regularly may also experience other social, legal, financial, and/or emotional problems.

OVERDOSE – what to look out for

Someone that is experiencing an overdose may also experience one or more of the following symptoms:

- increased body temperature and dehydration
- irregular heartbeat or chest pain
- headache and dizziness
- seizures
- nausea, vomiting or stomach cramps
- extreme anxiety
- paranoid thoughts and hallucinations (seeing, hearing, or feeling things that don't exist)
- aggressive and unpredictable behaviour
- repetitive movements and loss of coordination.

If you or someone you know is experiencing any of these overdose symptoms, phone 000 immediately for medical assistance.

Why does methamphetamine affect movement?

Methamphetamine causes abnormally high levels of a chemical in the brain called dopamine. Abnormally high levels of this brain chemical can damage neurons (cells) in the brain that are important for movement. Evidence has shown that using methamphetamine, or other stimulant drugs such as ecstasy, can have long-lasting effects on your movement.

Using these drugs as few as five times can lead to a noticeable tremor or shaking in your hands, and problems using your hands to complete tasks, such as using your phone. Using methamphetamine can also increase the risk of developing a movement disorder called Parkinson's disease later in life.

Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia (DASSA) is raising awareness of this issue, with information based on research conducted by the University of South Australia.

What can I do if I am concerned about my health?

- If you are concerned about the effect of methamphetamine on your movement or health, speak to your doctor or GP clinic about your concerns.
- For confidential telephone counselling and information, please contact the Drug and Alcohol Information Service on 1300 13 1340 between 8:30 am and 10.00 pm any day.
- For more information about methamphetamine or other drugs, and finding help for alcohol and drug problems, visit knowyouroptions.sa.gov.au

Reducing the risk

It is always safer not to use illicit drugs.

The risks of using methamphetamine can be reduced by:

- not injecting the drug (to reduce injecting-related harms, including blood-borne virus infection and transmission). Those who choose to continue injecting should try to use safe injection practices (thefirststop.org.au/app/uploads/2016/11/AIVL-guide-to-safer-injecting.pdf).
- use smaller amounts less often and avoid regular use
- avoid using methamphetamine with other drugs, particularly other stimulant drugs
- not using methamphetamine while you are alone, reducing overdose-related risk
- maintain adequate hydration.

For more information

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)
Phone: 1300 13 1340 (free local call)

Confidential telephone counselling and information available between 8:30am and 10pm every day.

sahealth.sa.gov.au/dassa

