



Australian Government



ICE AND BASE

Ice and base are methamphetamines, part of the amphetamine family of drugs which also includes speed. Ice is the most pure form of methamphetamine, followed by base then speed. The 'high' experienced from ice and base is much more intense, and with intense reactions come powerful responses including comedown, the potential for dependence (addiction) and chronic physical and mental problems.

Ice is known by other names, including crystal meth, meth, crystal, shabu, batu, d-meth, tina and glass. Base is also known as speed dexedrine, dexies, dex, shad, go-ee, glass, tina, paste, oxblood, shabu, yabba and crank.

Ice and base facts at a glance

The signs and symptoms of using ice can include:

- increased heart and breathing rate
- trembling hands and fingers
- high blood pressure
- overheating and excessive sweating
- stomach cramps
- blurred vision
- bad headaches
- dizziness
- difficulty sleeping
- reduced appetite
- irritability and hostility
- hallucinations
- paranoia
- psychosis
- panic attacks
- violent or erratic behaviour
- itching, picking, scratching skin
- skin problems/lesions

The consequences of using ice may include:

- paranoia
- increased risk of stroke
- high risk of dependence (addiction)
- chronic sleep problems
- memory loss
- HIV and hepatitis infections through needle-sharing
- anorexia
- malnutrition
- heart and lung problems
- increased risk of kidney problems
- depression
- loss of ability to make decisions.

Physical effects of ice

When ice or base is used, the receptors in the brain are flooded with 'reward' chemicals. As more is taken, these receptors can be destroyed. Prolonged ice use can lead to a point when the user no longer feels pleasure without further ice use.

Anecdotal evidence from ice users is that the same intense 'high' is not achieved as readily after the first use. This means that a user needs to take more of the drug to replicate the same feeling.

Problems using ice

In the short term, ice or base use can produce increased heart rate, hypertension, irregular body temperature and increased breathing rate. It can also constrict blood vessels and cause heart problems.

Longer-term users of these drugs often look older than their age and may have damaged teeth and lesions on the skin. These users are at a greater risk of stroke, experience decreased lung function and develop poor cognitive functioning resulting in memory and decision making issues. Injecting can result in scarring, abscesses, vein damage and exposure to blood-borne viruses.

Studies have shown the use of ice and base is associated with brain and mental health conditions, including ruptured blood vessels in the brain, memory-loss, indecision, depression and psychosis. These drugs can cause paranoia and hallucinations and the user may also become aggressive and violent, possibly requiring sedation and physical restraint or police intervention.

Using ice or base can also lead to social and financial problems and the risk of family breakdown and losing friends.

Dependence on ice and base can be physical, psychological, or both.

People who are physically dependent on ice or base develop tolerance to the drug. This makes it necessary to take more of the drug to get the same effect. They can also find that their bodies have become used to functioning with the drug present. As a result users need to increase their dosage as they develop tolerance and require ice in their system to feel 'normal'.

People who are psychologically dependent on ice or base find that using these drugs becomes far more important than other activities in their lives. They crave these drugs and find it very difficult to stop using them.

If people who are dependent on ice suddenly stop taking it they will experience withdrawal symptoms because their bodies have to readjust to functioning without the drug. People may experience withdrawal symptoms for a couple of weeks.