

## FACT SHEET

# Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine is a synthetic drug, meaning that it is made from chemical ingredients rather than occurring naturally. The methamphetamine consumed in Canada is largely produced here, in clandestine laboratories. These labs are defined as any stationary or mobile location where a drug is manufactured. It might be a house, a car or a field.

Methamphetamine is “synthesized” by heating a variety of chemical ingredients together to obtain the final substance. Most clandestine labs “cook” up ingredients from cold medication, like ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, with other chemicals such as red phosphorus, hydrochloric acid, anhydrous ammonia and other household solvents. The production of one pound of methamphetamine creates five to seven pounds of toxic waste, along with poisonous gas.

Crystal meth is one street form of the drug, methamphetamine hydrochloride, which comes in clear, chunky crystals, which are then inhaled or smoked.

It is also called “ice,” “crystal,” “glass” and “tina.”

“Crank” is a smelly, yellow form of “meth” that is usually snorted. Crank is often the cheapest form of the drug.

“Lith” is short for the lithium taken from batteries in the manufacturing process. Lith comes in a paste form that is usually smoked. It is more expensive than crank but cheaper than the crystal form.

Meth and other amphetamines are known as stimulants because they stimulate the body’s central nervous system (CNS). Methamphetamine’s effects on the CNS are strong and, depending on the amount used, may be quite toxic.

An overdose of methamphetamine may result in dangerously high body temperature (hyperthermia) and seizures. If the overdose stays untreated, death may result.

## Effects of Short-Term Use

While using methamphetamines a person may:

- feel an intense “rush”
- have more energy and be more alert
- feel extremely happy and excited
- feel less hungry
- have a dry mouth and cracked lips
- have large pupils and rapid eye movements
- have flushed, clammy skin
- have an increased heart rate
- have increased blood pressure
- be short of breath
- have trouble speaking
- act aggressively
- feel nauseous and vomit
- be uncoordinated
- have severe muscle spasms
- have a high body temperature
- have an irregular heart beat
- have a stroke

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## Effects of Long- Term Use

After heavy use of methamphetamines, over a long period of time, a person may experience:

- sores on the body from scratching imaginary bugs
- damage to the inside of the nose if the drug has been snorted
- damaged blood vessels and skin problems if the drug has been injected
- lead poisoning if lead acetate has been used in the production
- blurred vision and dizziness
- feelings of rage
- weight loss
- lack of good nutrition
- anxiety
- inability to sleep
- psychotic episodes
- paranoia
- hallucinations
- inflammation of the heart lining

With increasing use of the drug, there are strong indications that users suffer brain damage, including memory impairment and an

increasing inability to grasp abstract thoughts. Those who do manage to recover from addiction and retain memory and the ability to function in society are usually subject to some memory gaps and extreme mood swings.

## Methamphetamine and Dependency

Methamphetamines are highly addictive with a high potential for abuse. A person who is dependent will continue to use despite the negative impact on his/her life. With regular use, tolerance develops to the effects of Meth so that users have to take more and more of the drug to experience the same effects. If regular users stop taking Meth, they may experience symptoms of withdrawal, which include strong cravings for the drug, irritability, a lack of energy, increased appetite, sleep problems and depression. People who have quit using have experienced a period of time where nothing seems pleasurable. This period can last six to eight months for casual users and two to three years for regular users.

### Sources:

- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Addiction Commission (AADAC)
- Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM)
- Health Canada (Be Drug Wise)
- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation ([www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca))