

Methamphetamine: Forms and Use Patterns

Methamphetamine, also called methylamphetamine, is a synthetic stimulant drug that is sold under various street names including 'speed', 'base', 'meth', 'ice', 'crystal' or 'crystal meth', 'amphetamines', 'whiz' and 'goey'. There are four recognised ways of marketing methamphetamine at a street level which are explained below.



Powder – a white or off-white powder generally known as 'speed', typically of low purity, which can be snorted, injected or taken orally. The powder form of methamphetamine is usually adulterated with glucose.



Base – a damp or oily substance with a white to yellow or brown colour with a higher purity than powder. It can vary a lot in its appearance and is known by a range of terms, including 'pure', 'paste', and 'wax'. This form is typically injected and sometimes swallowed. Base is sold in 'points', which weigh about 0.1 grams.



Ice – also known as 'crystal meth' is methamphetamine in its purest form. It has a translucent to white crystalline appearance. Ice is usually smoked or injected, and is typically sold in 'points' (0.1 grams).



Pills – methamphetamine has also been sold in pill form on the ecstasy market. These pills contain only a small dose of methamphetamine, which is often combined with ketamine to give an ecstasy-like effect. Pills are swallowed.

How do people use it?

The typical dose of methamphetamine is a 'point' (0.1 grams) of base or ice, or half a gram of the lower purity powder, which is taken once or twice over the course of an evening or a day.

Methamphetamine is typically injected by dissolving the drug with water in the small resealable plastic bag in which it is sold. A syringe is used to measure the amount of water and withdraw the dissolved drug from the bag.

Ice is smoked using a glass pipe, or less commonly a water pipe or 'bong'. Ice is heated in the bulb of the pipe until it vapourises and it is then inhaled. When people smoke ice they often share it among friends, passing the pipe around, and letting the methamphetamine re-crystallise in between being used.

People who snort or swallow methamphetamine usually take the powder form of the drug.

What are the effects?

Methamphetamine can produce:

- a sense of well-being
- energy
- euphoria (or high)
- confidence
- alertness

Signs of methamphetamine intoxication include:

- sweaty/clammy skin
- dilated or large pupils
- agitation
- talkativeness

Who uses methamphetamine?

Methamphetamine is used by a wide range of people for a variety of reasons.

Common 'types' of methamphetamine users include:

- young ecstasy users who will snort speed or smoke ice on weekends with their friends
- older injecting heroin users who will also inject methamphetamine
- people who regard methamphetamine as their drug of choice, who tend to inject the drug once to several times a week

People usually take methamphetamine at home in the company of their friends, often before going out to socialise.

Information based on the findings from: **McKetin, R., McLaren, J., and Kelly, E.** (2005). *The Sydney methamphetamine market: Patterns of supply, use, personal harms and social consequences*. National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund Monograph Series No. 13. Australasian Centre for Policing Research, Adelaide.

Produced by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales, 2006.
Funded by the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund, Commonwealth of Australia.