

# I think my parent may be using crystal methamphetamine ('ice')



*This resource is an adaption of an ADF Resource, by the Matilda Centre.*

*This page provides information and support resources for young people who are worried about a parents' crystal methamphetamine ('ice') use.*

If your parent or carer uses crystal **methamphetamine** ('ice'), you might face some things that are hard to handle at your age. Not everyone who lives with a parent or carer who uses ice will experience problems - but sometimes there can be more stress at home about things like money, having a stable place to live, having enough food prepared for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, getting to school on time, and getting homework done.

Sometimes your parent or carer might change a lot when they use ice, and you might find it harder to feel safe, close, and trusting with them. You might find yourself feeling confused, scared, angry or really stressed out. Sometimes you might feel lonely, and it's normal to feel this way, but you aren't alone. Others are going through exactly what you're going through, and there are people you can go to for support like **Kids Helpline (Ph. 1800 55 1800)**. We've put together some information to explain what can happen when people use ice, what signs might indicate that your parent or carer is having problems with ice, and steps you can follow to look after yourself and get further support.



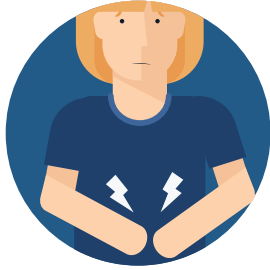
## What happens when people use crystal methamphetamine ('ice')?

Crystal methamphetamine ('ice') releases chemicals in the brain that speed up the brain and body. It makes people feel full of energy, excited and talkative for a bit of time (e.g. 4 to 12 hours). For more information on the effects of ice, check out this page.

The not so good effects of using ice can include:



Headaches and dizziness



Stomach cramps, nausea,  
and vomiting



Aggressive behaviour



Jaw clenching and teeth  
grinding



Insomnia (not sleeping  
well)

People can also experience a '**comedown**' after using ice, where they feel really low or depressed, exhausted, nervy, or anxious.

## How do I know if my parent has a problem with ice?

Drug **dependence** (or addiction) happens when someone is unable to control or stop drinking alcohol or using other drugs even though drinking or using drugs is causing harm. People use alcohol and drugs for many different reasons and most people don't develop a dependence.

Signs that your parent or carer might be experiencing drug dependence include:

- often being late or missing work and family events
- often having difficulty paying bills and asking to borrow money
- using alcohol or other drugs at home
- using more alcohol and drugs than they had planned to or needing to have more to get the same effect
- experiencing **withdrawal** symptoms (intense cravings for alcohol or drugs, headaches, fatigue, feelings of **anxiety** or low mood, aggression, cramps, vomiting)
- feeling the need to keep drinking or using drugs to feel normal
- not being able to stop drinking or using drugs even though they've tried



## Supporting your parent or carer

Your parent or carer may have difficulty caring for you due to their ice use. This can sometimes lead to a role reversal where you become the caregiver for your parent and your siblings.

Things you might find yourself having to do include:

- cooking
- cleaning
- grocery shopping
- paying bills

paying bills

- comforting your parent/carer when they're upset and listening to their problems
- having to keep secrets or tell lies for your parent/carer
- getting caught in the middle of arguments between your parent/carer and other family members

This can be tough and can feel really stressful because you're having to take on adult responsibilities before you're ready to.

**Remember that you deserve help.**

**You didn't cause this situation, you can't cure it, and you can't control it.**

**It's okay to take care of yourself first before caring for others.**

## Looking after yourself and getting support

If this sounds like you, it's important that you look after yourself and get some support.

Here's a few ideas for what you could do:

- **Tell someone you know and trust about what's happening at home.** This might be a family member you feel comfortable with, your school counsellor, a teacher, a coach, or a parent of a friend.
- **Reach out to support services.** There are some great organisations that can help with lots of different things like mental health, school, and managing money. See our list below for more details.
- **Make a safe space.** It's helpful if you can find a place to go for a short break or overnight if you're feeling unsafe. This should be somewhere you can feel comfortable and can show your feelings. This might be a family member or friend's house.
- **Take a break.** Being able to get away from what's going on at home to relax, unwind, and recharge can help you feel a lot better. It might just be kicking the footy with a friend, going to the skatepark, playing sport, getting out in nature, or gaming at a friend's place.



And if you're feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or upset, there are strategies you can use to help you feel better:

- **connect** – hang out with people who make you feel good
- **move your body** – play outside, run, walk, box, ride, or go to the gym or pool
- **get creative** – play music, draw, paint, build Lego
- **listen to music** – play the songs, artists and albums which help get you through
- **talk it out** – with a mate or someone else you trust

## Support Services

- **Kids Helpline** - A free, confidential, 24/7 online support service for people aged 5 to 25.
- **headspace** - Mental health services across Australia for young people.
- **Youth Support and Advocacy Service** - YSAS provides support and clinical services for young people experiencing hardship.
- **Young Carers Network** - The YCN raises young carer awareness, provides information, and directs young carers to appropriate pathways to support.
- **Little Dreamers** - Supporting young people 4 to 25 who provide care for a family member.

## Sources

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