

## Treatment and Recovery for People Who Use Ice



Just as the effects of methamphetamine vary from person to person, recovery from **dependence** (also called addiction) also looks different for everyone.

While there is no one definition of recovery, recovery from problematic drug use is generally a process of change through which someone works towards improved physical, psychological, and social wellbeing and overall enhanced quality of life.

For some, focusing on nurturing fulfilling relationships and goals outside of their drug use might be the priority of their recovery journey. For others, abstinence (no drug use) might be an important goal. Your recovery journey will be unique to you.

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Often, the first step in someone's recovery journey is recognising that they are having a difficult time and would like to make some changes in relation to their use of drugs. Again, the point at which this occurs can differ for everyone but there are some common signs that may indicate it would be helpful to reach out for support.

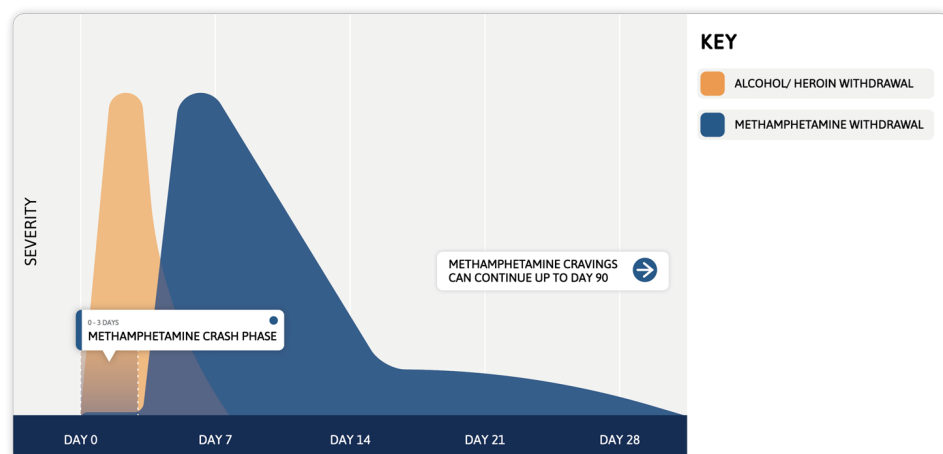
[Click here to get feedback about your use of crystal methamphetamine](#)

### What will your recovery journey look like?

Your recovery journey will be unique to you and your situation, experiences, goals, and values. It is normal for challenges to arise during the recovery process and this might include setbacks or 'detours'. Changing your use of crystal methamphetamine can be difficult, but it can also be rewarding as you make adjustments to your life that are more in line with your values and goals.

### Withdrawal

Withdrawal refers to the bodily reactions you experience when you stop or reduce your consumption of a drug that your body has adjusted to having in its system. Withdrawal from methamphetamine generally takes longer than withdrawal from other drugs, which can make the recovery journey more challenging.



Adapted from Beyond the tip of the iceberg: A practitioners' guide to ice. See the key source list below for more information.

For example, withdrawal symptoms for heroin or alcohol typically start within 24 hours of stopping drug use, peak over the next couple of days and subside within a week. For methamphetamines, people typically experience a 2 to 3 day “comedown” or “crash” phase before withdrawal symptoms kick in where they feel exhausted. After this phase, people then experience more intense withdrawal symptoms such as strong cravings, sleeping difficulties, headaches and pain and stiffness in the body for up to 10 days. It’s around this point in time, 1 – 2 weeks into withdrawal, when people are at the greatest risk of starting to use methamphetamine again and when they need the most support. While withdrawal symptoms become less intense at this point, they can last for a further two weeks or more. Methamphetamine cravings persist throughout the entire withdrawal period and can carry on for up to three months. Although everyone’s withdrawal from methamphetamines will be different, there are common withdrawal symptoms that you should be aware of.

The mental and physical health of the person using methamphetamines may also affect the severity of withdrawal, which is why we recommend seeking professional support to discuss and help build up mental and physical health in preparation for the withdrawal period.

## Support during your recovery

There are a range of services available to support you on your recovery journey. Although it can be difficult to seek help, in most cases the sooner you reach out for support, the better. It’s important to know that you don’t need to be dependent on crystal methamphetamine nor do you have to have used it for a long time in order to get help. Whether you feel your use of crystal methamphetamine or other drugs is getting out of control or you are starting to notice problems and unintended consequences arising, it’s never too early (or too late) to seek support.

Recovery from methamphetamine use disorder or dependence is challenging and can take 12 to 18 months or longer due to the significant readjustments to your thoughts and behaviours. Many people in recovery find themselves experiencing strong cravings when seeing or being with people they associate with their methamphetamine use. Because of this, some people choose to change their social circles, which can be a significant change that takes time and benefits from support. It’s not uncommon for people entering recovery to feel lonely or isolated, and getting used to socialising again can be an adjustment. But you don’t have to do it alone and connecting with your peers in recovery can be helpful as they will be able to understand and relate to your experience.

Health workers are there to support you along the way. They are there to provide support and guidance and will listen to any concerns you may have. Post treatment support (also known as aftercare) options are also available to provide further assistance to someone who has completed treatment but would like additional support to keep them on track over the longer term. Examples of post treatment supports include telephone or online counselling and ongoing involvement with a peer support group.

## Treatment and where to get help

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There can be times when you go in and out of treatment and continue using crystal methamphetamine on and off. While this is a common and perfectly normal part of the process, it does not represent everyone's experience and may not need to be a part of yours.

Your local doctor can be a good starting point – they can discuss your concerns with you and provide referrals to other services that you might need.

For free and confidential advice about alcohol and other drugs, you can also call **the National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline** on **1800 250 015**.

**The Stimulant Treatment Line** is a 24 hour confidential service offering information, education and counselling around stimulant use. You can call the 24-hour telephone line on **8382 1088 or 1800 101 188 (outside Sydney) for support around your own or someone else's stimulant use**.

If you need emergency support, please call Lifeline ([13 11 14](tel:131114)) which is a 24-hour crisis helpline or dial '000' for the police or an ambulance.

For more information on support services and how to get help for yourself or a loved one, visit the [What type of help is available?](#) and [When and where to get help](#) sections of *Cracks in the Ice*.

### KEY SOURCES

Lee, N., Jenner, L., & Ross, P. (2017). *Beyond the tip of the iceberg: A practitioners' guide to ice*. Retrieved from:

Sheedy, C. K., & Whitter, M. (2013). Guiding principles and elements of recovery-oriented systems of care: What do we know from the research?. *Journal of Drug Addiction, Education, and Eradication*

This page was written and reviewed by a person with lived and living experience of methamphetamine use.