

# What is crystal methamphetamine ('ice')?

Crystal methamphetamine, or 'ice', is a synthetic **stimulant** drug and **variant** of **methamphetamine**. Methamphetamine typically comes in three different forms (ice, base and speed) that vary in their appearance and **potency**.

Crystal methamphetamine is one of the most **potent** varieties of the drug and is usually colourless and odourless. The name 'ice' became popular due to the drug's form of white little 'crystals' and glass-like appearance.

Ice



Appearance

Translucent crystals, sometimes shards.

Also known as

Crystal meth, meth, shabu, tina, glass.


Method of use

Smoking (e.g. with a glass pipe), injecting.

POTENCY

high

Base



Appearance

Dampish, 'gluggy' substance. Colour varies from white to brown.

Also known as

Pure, point, wax, meth.

Method of use

Swallowing, injecting.

POTENCY

medium

high

Speed



Appearance

White or off-white powder.

Also known as

Goey, meth.

Method of use

Snorting, swallowing, injecting.

POTENCY

low

medium

The effects of ice differ slightly from speed and base because it is often a purer form of methamphetamine, meaning it gives a stronger and longer lasting 'high'. Because of this, it also has more **potent** and serious side effects, both during use and in the '**comedown**' or 'crash' phase after use. This is why, compared to other forms of methamphetamine, ice has a greater potential for the person using the drug to develop **dependence, psychosis**, and other long-term physical and mental health problems. Learn more about [the effects of ice on the brain and body](#). Learn more about [the mental health effects of ice](#).

The use of ice can affect people differently and may be more problematic for some people than others. The impact of ice also depends on how much is taken, the **purity** of the drug, how the drug is taken (e.g. injection, smoking) and the persons physical and mental health. Repeated use of ice builds up tolerance requiring higher and more frequent doses to achieve the same effects.

Ice is usually sold in points (0.1g) or grams and can be cut (mixed) with other substances. As crystal methamphetamine is an illicit drug, how it is made is unregulated and there is no way for you to know exactly what is in each batch or what other drugs may be mixed in. This means that there is no organisation which tests the quality and safety of the drug before people use it.

Because of this, methamphetamine is often mixed or cut with other substances. This can be for many reasons, e.g., to make it weigh more, and charging more money for it. Some substances that can be cut (or mixed) with methamphetamine include:

- Other drugs, like opioids (e.g., fentanyl), stimulants (e.g., MDMA) or new psychoactive substances (NPS)
- Other substances, such as baking soda, sugar and caffeine.

It can be hard to tell if methamphetamine is cut with other substances, as a lot of additives do not have a distinctive smell or taste. Regardless of what is mixed in, this further increasing risks of unknown side effects.

People may also take other substances at the same time as ice, for example, drinking alcohol or smoking cannabis. The more substances a person takes (or is affected by) at a time, the more chance there is of something going wrong. Learn more about [what happens when you use ice with other drugs](#).

In the past decade or so, Australia has seen an increase in the use of ice as the main form of methamphetamine. Learn more about [trends in methamphetamine and ice use in Australia](#).

## KEY SOURCES

Australian Drug Foundation. (2016). *Amphetamines*. Retrieved from: <https://adf.org.au/drug-facts/amphetamines/>

Peck, Y., Clough, A.R., Culshaw, P.N., & Liddell, M.J. (2019). Multi-drug cocktails: Impurities in commonly used illicit drugs seized by police in Queensland, Australia. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 201, p49-57. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2019.03.019>