



What is ice?

Ice is an illicit drug made from methamphetamine. It is known by different names such as crystal meth, shabu, glass, shardy party. It is a stimulant drug (that is it speeds up the messages travelling between the brain and body) and is stronger and more addictive than most other stimulants such as speed.

What does it look like?

Ice usually looks like small slivers of glass or crystals but can also be a powder. It can be white, beige or yellow.

How do people use it?

It is usually smoked or injected.

What are the short term effects of ice?

Ice produces a very intense 'rush'. Depending on how many times it is taken, this effect can last between four to twelve hours. Long term use can lead to dependency (the user no longer feels pleasure without further ice use).

Some of the short term effects of using ice:

- ⊙ a strong sense of happiness (euphoria)
- ⊙ talking lots and feeling energetic
- ⊙ increased movement and restlessness (such as shaky hands)
- ⊙ increased body temperature, sweating and dry mouth
- ⊙ fast breathing
- ⊙ increased heart beat
- ⊙ big pupils, blurred vision
- ⊙ not needing to eat as much
- ⊙ not needing to sleep as much
- ⊙ sounds seem louder and lights look brighter.

What are the long term effects of ice?

If a person uses ice regularly over time this may cause:

- ⊙ aged appearance (they look older)
- ⊙ weight loss – from loss of appetite
- ⊙ damaged teeth – from teeth grinding and dry mouth which causes decay
- ⊙ sores (lesions) on the skin
- ⊙ risk of stroke – caused when blood vessels in the brain get blocked
- ⊙ difficulty breathing (decreased lung function)
- ⊙ poor memory and difficulty with making decisions
- ⊙ increased risk of getting diseases through sharing needles (Hep B, Hep C, HIV)
- ⊙ inability to sleep (insomnia)
- ⊙ anxiety, paranoia and aggression.

Long term use of ice can also lead to loss of family and friends, financial worries and trouble with the law.

Mental health/ice psychosis

Some people may go through a period of ice psychosis, where they feel they can't trust people, and they may see or hear things that aren't really there. They may believe that people are 'out to get them' or they may feel like there are bugs crawling under their skin. These symptoms can become very serious, and are made worse with continued use of ice. If a person has these symptoms they should stop using ice, rest and seek help from a doctor.

What to do about an overdose

A large amount of ice or a strong dose can cause an overdose. People who have overdosed may have:

- ⊙ racing heart beat and chest pain
- ⊙ breathing problems
- ⊙ fits or uncontrolled jerking
- ⊙ extreme agitation, confusion, clumsiness
- ⊙ aggression (and be likely to lash out, often because they are frightened)
- ⊙ sudden, severe headache
- ⊙ collapsed because they are dehydrated and overheated.



Call triple zero (000) if a person has been using ice and you think they need help.

While you wait for help to arrive:

- ⦿ stay a safe distance if the person is being threatening or is unable to control themselves
- ⦿ talk to the person slowly and calmly, keep crowds away
- ⦿ if the person has collapsed, move them into the shade, make sure they have enough air and loosen any tight clothing.

Dependence on ice

People who become physically dependent on ice need to take more of the drug to get the same effect. They find that their body has become used to having the drug present. As a result the user needs to increase the amount they take to feel 'normal'.

People who are psychologically dependent on ice find that using the drug becomes more important than other activities such as work, or spending time with family and friends. They crave the drug (have a strong desire to use it) and find it very difficult to stop using.

Withdrawal (coming down)

The more ice a person uses each time and the longer each session is, the worse the come down or 'crash' is when they stop. The crash and come-down period can last between two to seven days when the person feels tired, moody and unable to concentrate. They may feel depressed and need a lot of sleep. Symptoms of low mood, irritability and craving can last up to 10 weeks.

Withdrawal symptoms can include:

- ⦿ feeling confused
- ⦿ feeling fear or distrust (paranoia)
- ⦿ headaches
- ⦿ general aches and pains
- ⦿ hunger and increased appetite
- ⦿ disturbed sleep, often interrupted by nightmares.

If you want help or support or are worried about someone's ice use call the Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) in your state.

References

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