What is Crystal Meth?
Otherwise known by its street names, ‘Ice’, ‘Meth’, ‘Crystal’, ‘Tina’ or ‘Glass’, Crystal Meth is illegal. It is the most potent of the amphetamine drugs, with approximately 80% purity, more pure than Speed, which has approximately 10% purity. Often appearing as transparent sheet-like crystals, Crystal Meth has the seductive appearance of pink, blue or green icicles. Most Crystal Meth in Australia is distributed as a capsule, powder or in chunks resembling ‘ice’.

How is it used?
Crystal Meth is typically smoked or injected, with the user experiencing an intense sensation or ‘rush’ followed by a high, which may last for up to 12 hours.

What are the Stats?
Crystal Meth is used by people of all ages, although it is most popular and known as a club drug. Research statistics now show that the use of Crystal Meth is rapidly on the
rise from only a rare usage of the drug in the 1980’s to over one third of illicit drug users today. According to the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, approximately 2.3% of the Australian population (aged 14 or over) had used Meth/Amphetamines (including Crystal Meth) within the previous 12 months, with many of those acquiring the drug from a friend or acquaintance. Of particular concern is that the drug appears to have increasingly broad appeal to young adults and recreational drug users, who in every sense were fairly well adjusted, with good levels of education, high levels of employment and with little criminal background prior to using Crystal Meth.

What are the Risks and the Short and Long Term Effects?

Immediate effects of Crystal Meth use include feelings of euphoria, increased alertness, talkativeness, restlessness, picking, scratching, tremors, speedy breathing and heart rate, difficulty sleeping and abrupt shifts in speech and thought making, which make it hard to be understood. Agitation, panic attacks, paranoia, irritability, aggression, bizarre behaviour, “amphetamine psychosis” and hallucinations may also be symptoms. Crystal Meth is highly addictive and can produce extreme cravings.

As Crystal Meth wears off, the user may experience depression, radical mood swings, violent reactions or exhaustion. Since every batch of Crystal Meth is tainted with toxic chemicals, the long term effects are even more serious and may include: increased risk of heart and blood pressure problems, rapid weight loss leading to malnutrition, chronic sleep difficulties, decreased immunity to colds/flu, depression, anxiety, paranoia, brain damage (reduced memory and thinking), dental problems, lung damage, nasal passage damage, vein damage and blood borne viruses such as Hepatitis. Social effects can include financial loss, family and relationship difficulties together with strain keeping up with work or uni studies. Those taking Crystal Meth may be frequently violent, hostile, depressed, anxious or paranoid, which inevitably affects those around them.

Tolerance, Dependence, Coming Down

Those using Crystal Meth may typically experience a tolerance to the drug, such that you will require increasing doses to achieve the desired effect. As is the case for most drug users, over time physical and psychological dependence develops, with the drug taking increasing precedence as a priority over other activities or people in your lives.

As the effects of ice wear off, you may experience tension, depression, radical mood swings, uncontrollable violence and exhaustion. Withdrawal symptoms may also be severe, including: disorientation; hunger; extreme fatigue and exhaustion; decreased energy; apathy and the limited ability to experience pleasure; anxiety; irritability and depression; and craving more ice.

On the legal side it goes without saying that using, possessing, making or selling Crystal Meth is illegal and can result in criminal charges.

References

This tip sheet incorporates information taken from:


More information is available from:

- ReachOut: Ice (crystal methamphetamine hydrochloride) (http://www.reachout.com.au)

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Please note that this tip-sheet provides information and guidance only - it is not a substitute for professional counselling and support.