



Methamphetamine

What Is It?

Methamphetamine (“Meth”) is a powerful stimulant drug that affects the nervous system. It is powerful, addictive and very dangerous to your health. Meth goes by many other street names such as ice, chalk, crank, and crystal.

WARNING: Buyer Beware! Meth is an illicit drug that is available in NWT. Always assume illicit drugs may contain a very dangerous mixture of potentially lethal synthetic (man-made) opioids like fentanyl and other additives.

What Does It Look Like?

Meth comes in a variety of forms including powder, crystals, and pills.

How Does It Work?

Meth is a stimulant drug that speeds up systems in your body. Meth enters the brain quickly. It can give people a rush or euphoria and they may feel more energetic, upbeat and alert.

Meth is highly addictive and cravings for the drug can become extremely intense. When people binge meth (meaning they use meth continuously over several days or weeks), the euphoria decreases over time and unpleasant effects and compulsive behaviour increase. After binges, people using meth usually experience a “crash” and can sleep for long periods of time and feel hungry, depressed or anxious.

Why Is It Dangerous?

Meth can have widespread effects on a person's life including physical, mental, and social harms. Meth is extremely powerful and addictive. It causes many health problems including:

- Dental problems
- Insomnia
- Anxiety, irritability, and mood disturbances
- High blood pressure
- Excessive sweating
- Weight loss
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Hallucinations
- Infections
- Organ damage
- Psychosis
- Heart attack

Methamphetamine is sometimes added to other drugs such as MDMA, to increase and intensify their stimulant effect, which means people may be using it and becoming addicted without even knowing.

What Does Stimulant Toxicity Look Like?

Symptoms of stimulant toxicity include rigid jerking limbs (arms and legs), loss of consciousness, seizures, high temperature/sweating, rapid pulse, and chest pains – **this is a medical emergency! Call 9-1-1.**



- While waiting for the ambulance to arrive, stay with them for support and stay calm. The **Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act** protects you from drug possession charges when helping in an overdose situation.
- **If in doubt, give Naloxone.** It will not reverse the effects of stimulant toxicity, but it can reverse the effects of opioids that can be in any illicit drugs. Naloxone will not cause further harm.
- If the heart stops, give the person CPR.
- If they are having a seizure, make sure there is nothing around them that can hurt them. Do not put anything in their mouth or restrain them.
- If they are conscious, follow the steps below for stimulant overamping.

Stimulant Overamping

Stimulant overamping is when someone takes too many stimulant drugs. It is specific to “overdosing” on stimulants like cocaine. If someone is conscious and experiencing “over-amping”, or mental distress because of stimulant use and/or sleep deprivation from stimulant use:

- Stay calm, stay with them, encourage them not to take any more substances, and move away from activity and noise.
- If they are thirsty, give them water or other non-sugary, non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic drinks to help replace lost electrolytes.
- Place a cool wet cloth on their forehead, back of neck, armpits.
- Watch for any changes.

Safer Use Tips

There is **no** safe way to use methamphetamine. If you are using methamphetamine, here are some tips to decrease your risk:

- **Start low and go slow.** Start with a “tester dose” and wait before taking more. Be aware that pausing or reducing use, even for a few days, can significantly lower tolerance – starting low and going slow can decrease the risk of a fatal overdose.
- **Don’t use alone.** If you are using alone, call NORS -- the National Overdose Response Service Hotline, at 1-888-688-NORS (6677) so you can get help if you need it.
- **Don’t mix with other substances,** including alcohol and prescription or over the counter medications.
- **Don’t share equipment!** Sharing drug equipment like needles, pipes or spoons, increases risk of infection. Contaminated equipment can spread several serious diseases, such as HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C.
- If smoking from a pipe, don’t use steel wool or Brillo as a filter. Use brass screens instead.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drink water and use lip balm.



- **Know the signs of an opioid overdose and act!** Stay within cell range or have access to a satellite phone in case you need to call 9-1-1. **Always carry Naloxone with you and know how to use it.** Kits are available for free at locations across the NWT – **make sure your kit doesn't freeze!**
- **Take a photo of the drug** before you use it. If you end up getting sick, this can help keep other people safe and makes it easier to help you.

Need Help?

Reach out to your local health centre, community counsellor/mental health professional, or call 8-1-1.