Ice

What is ice?

Ice is a stimulant drug, which means it speeds up the messages travelling between the brain and the body. It is a type of methamphetamine, which is generally stronger, more addictive and has more harmful side effects than the powder form known as speed.

Ice usually comes as small chunky clear crystals that look like ice. It can also come as white or brownish crystal-like powder with a strong smell and bitter taste.

Other names

Crystal meth, shabu, crystal, glass, shard, p.

How is it used?

Ice is generally smoked or injected and the effects can be felt in 3 to 7 seconds. It is sometimes swallowed (15 to 30 minutes to feel the effects) or snorted (3 to 5 minutes to feel the effects).

Effects of ice

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries some risk. It’s important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

The effects of ice can last around 6 hours, but it might be hard to sleep for a few days after using the drug.

Ice affects everyone differently, but effects may include:

- Feelings of pleasure and confidence
- Increased alertness and energy
- Repeating simple actions like itching and scratching
- Enlarge pupils and dry mouth
- Teeth grinding and excessive sweating
- Fast heart rate and breathing
- Reduced appetite
- Increased sex drive

Injecting ice and sharing needles can increase the risk of:

- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- HIV/AIDS

Snorting ice can damage the nasal passages and cause nose bleeds.

Overdose

If a large amount or a strong batch is taken, it could also cause an overdose. If any of the following effects are experienced an ambulance should be called straight away by dialling triple zero (000). Ambulance officers don’t need to involve the police.

Ice is generally stronger, more addictive and has more harmful side effects than the powder form known as speed.
• Racing heart beat and chest pain
• Breathing problems
• Fits or uncontrolled jerking
• Extreme agitation, confusion, clumsiness
• Sudden, severe headache
• Unconsciousness
• Stroke, heart attack and death

Coming down
It can take several days to ‘come down’ from using ice. The following effects may be experienced during this time:
• Difficulty sleeping and exhaustion
• Headaches, dizziness and blurred vision
• Paranoia, hallucinations and confusion
• Irritability and feeling ‘down’

Using a depressant drug such as alcohol, benzodiazepines or cannabis to help with the ‘come down’ effects may result in a cycle of dependence on both types of drugs.

Long term effects
With regular use, ice may eventually cause:
• Extreme weight loss due to reduced appetite
• Restless sleep
• Dry mouth and dental problems
• Regular colds or flu
• Trouble concentrating
• Breathlessness
• Muscle stiffness
• Anxiety, paranoia and violence
• Depression
• Heart and kidney problems
• Increased risk of stroke
• Needing to use more to get the same effect
• Financial, work or social problems

Ice psychosis
High doses of ice and frequent use may also cause ‘ice psychosis’. This condition is characterised by paranoid delusions, hallucinations and bizarre, aggressive or violent behaviour. These symptoms usually disappear a few days after the person stops using ice.

Dependence
People who regularly use ice can quickly become dependent on the drug. They may feel they need ice to go about their normal activities like working, studying and socialising, or just to get through the day.

Mental health problems
Some people who regularly use ice may start to feel less enjoyment with everyday activities. They can get stressed easily and their moods can go up and down quite quickly. These changes can lead to longer term problems with anxiety and depression. People may feel these effects for at least several weeks or months after they give up ice.
**Mixing ice with other drugs**

The effects of taking ice with other drugs – including over-the-counter or prescribed medications – can be unpredictable and dangerous, and could cause:

**Ice + speed or ecstasy:** enormous strain on the heart and other parts of the body, which can lead to stroke.

**Ice + alcohol, cannabis or benzodiazepines:** enormous strain on the body, and more likely to overdose. The stimulant effects of ice may mask the effects of depressant drugs like benzodiazepines and can increase the risk of overdose.

**Withdrawal**

Giving up ice after using it for a long time is challenging because the body has to get used to functioning without it. Withdrawal symptoms generally settle down after a week and will mostly disappear after a month. Symptoms can include:

- Cravings for ice
- Increased appetite
- Confusion and irritability
- Aches and pains
- Exhaustion
- Restless sleep and nightmares
- Anxiety, depression and paranoia

*References for this fact sheet are available at: Druginfo.adf.org.au.*