

What it looks like

Methylamphetamine – commonly called Methamphetamine – can be produced as a tablet, a powder or crystals, but it usually comes as a white crystalline powder.

It is sometimes known as ‘ice’ when in a crystal-like rock form, and as ‘yaba’ when in tablet form – usually red, orange or green.

How it's taken

It can be smoked, injected, snorted or swallowed. The crystal form of the drug does not smell and tastes bitter. It will dissolve in water or alcohol.

What it does

Methamphetamine is one of a group of drugs called amphetamines that affect the brain and nervous system. Like cocaine, methamphetamine makes you feel confident and wide awake.

The drug can alter a person's moods in different ways, depending on how it is taken. Small amounts of methamphetamine can bring on a feeling of exhilaration (make them feel high) and increase activity levels. The user may also breathe faster, lose their appetite and have powerful hallucinations.

How long the effects last

The effects of methamphetamine are similar to crack cocaine but last longer – between 4 and 12 hours, depending on how it is taken.



Addiction

Methamphetamine is powerful and highly addictive. Using it regularly, particularly the stronger forms such as ‘ice’, can make users both psychologically and physically dependent on the drug.

Risks

Dangers

This drug can cause disturbing hallucinations. One of the most common is ‘speed bugs’ or ‘crank bugs’, which make users think that bugs are crawling under their skin and cause them to go frantic trying to get them out.

Methamphetamine can make users hyperactive, violent and aggressive. Users who inject the drug are at risk of infection from HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C if they share needles and other injecting materials.

An overdose can lead to a stroke. People can damage their kidneys, lungs, stomach and intestines. They may go into a coma and even die as a result.

Some studies have linked reduced movement skills with methamphetamine use, which may suggest that users are more likely to develop Parkinsons disease.

Physical effects

Taking this drug can increase your heart rate and raise your blood pressure. The higher the dose, the greater these risks. Heavy and regular users can suffer increased levels of tooth decay, and may lose their teeth – a condition known as ‘meth mouth’.

Common side effects include nausea (feeling sick), panic attacks, confusion, repetitive behaviour and jaw clenching. People who use the drug regularly may also suffer lung, kidney, stomach and intestine disorders.

Mental effects

Methamphetamine can cause mental and psychiatric problems, with symptoms similar to paranoid schizophrenia, such as severe paranoia and hallucinations.

It can also bring on severe depression and psychosis, which can lead to feelings of wanting to harm yourself or others.

What to do in an emergency

Don't delay – phone 999 immediately.

If you think someone has overdosed on drugs, tell the operator what drugs they've taken (if you know).

What not to do

- Don't cause pain or another injury.
- Don't give them other drugs.
- Don't put them in a shower or bath.
- Don't walk them around.
- Don't leave them on their own.

Always follow the operator's instructions.

And remember, if you have any doubt always call 999. It could save the person's life.

What the law says Methamphetamine is a classified drug. For the current classification and information about the consequences of using and supplying methamphetamine, go to www.knowthescore.info.

Fact: by law, passing drugs to someone else, including friends, is classed as supplying.

Fact: some countries may refuse visas to people who have drug convictions.

Getting more information Phone the free and confidential 'Know the Score' information line on **0800 587 587 9**, to speak to a trained advisor.

Someone is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Calls from landlines are free and will not show up on the phone bill. Or, you can visit the 'Know the Score' website at www.knowthescore.info.

Both the information line and the website can provide information about local services. Also, you can ask your GP to refer you to a specialist drug service. To find a drug service in your area visit www.scottishdrugservices.com.

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