

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine belongs to the 'stimulant' group of drugs. It stimulates the brain and central nervous system (CNS) and temporarily increases alertness and physical activity.

There are 3 main forms of methamphetamine:

1. Speed (also known as go-ee, whiz, rev or uppers)
2. Base (also known as pure, point, paste or wax)
3. Crystal methamphetamine (also known as ice, crystal meth, meth or shabu).

Crystal methamphetamine is usually the purest, most potent, and most common form of methamphetamine used in Australia.

Typically, it is a coarse or fine colourless or white crystalline material. Although methamphetamine can be snorted, injected, swallowed, or smoked, crystal methamphetamine is usually smoked.

Smoking crystal methamphetamine accelerates the onset of effects.

Crystal methamphetamine is more potent and more likely to cause dependence than other forms of methamphetamine.

Most workers will not become dependent on crystal methamphetamine.

Approximately 15%-20% of people who use crystal methamphetamine become dependent.

If workers use crystal methamphetamine frequently, or in high doses, the risk of physical, social, and mental problems and dependence increases.

170,000 workers

Approximately 1.5% of the Australian workforce used methamphetamine in 2019.¹

Among workers who use methamphetamine 7.3% usually use at work.¹

Men are more likely than women to use methamphetamine.¹

About 2.2% of workers aged under 40 used methamphetamine compared to less than 1% of workers aged over 40.¹



At-risk workers and industries

Workers use drugs, including methamphetamine, for many reasons.

Methamphetamine may be used by:

- younger workers who like to 'party' during their non-work hours
- workers in manual, repetitive, or high stress occupations to give them the energy and drive required to work harder and longer and counteract fatigue
- workers with either self-diagnosed or untreated illnesses (e.g., attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or depression).

Industries with the highest rates of methamphetamine use include:

- construction
- mining
- hospitality.

ANY workplace may be impacted by methamphetamine use.

Methamphetamine use is more common in workplaces where there are:

- 18-39 year old trades people
- mainly male workers
- demanding working conditions and/or irregular hours.

Workplace impacts

Methamphetamine intoxication usually lasts between 6 and 12 hours. However, its effects may last much longer, and can have a range of impacts on workers and workplaces.

Although short-term use might enhance workers' productivity and performance, workplace safety and worker wellbeing can be compromised during the intoxication, 'come down', and withdrawal phases. Longer-term physical and mental health problems associated with methamphetamine use may also impact workplace safety and productivity.

As a result, workers' performance and productivity may fluctuate unpredictably.

Indicators of methamphetamine use

Strong sense of euphoria

Unusually alert & energised

Talkative & happy

Confident

Powerful and sexually aroused



Workers may be affected by methamphetamine if they used the drug:

- prior to commencing work
- at work
- during their leisure hours.

Use can impair:

- concentration
- ability to gauge speed and distance
- judgement and coordination.

Workers who use methamphetamine may be more likely to:

- be absent from work
- attend work under the influence of drugs
- drive or operate hazardous machinery while affected
- verbally or physically abuse someone while affected
- be overconfident in their ability to perform risky tasks
- have impaired concentration, speed and distance perceptions and judgement
- feel drowsy and/or fatigued
- lose coordination
- experience longer-term physical and mental health problems
- report high levels of psychological distress
- lower workplace morale.

Attending work under the influence of methamphetamine increases the likelihood of accidents and injuries, co-worker and/or customer conflict, and fatalities.

If you think a worker is experiencing problems with methamphetamine use, approach them for a confidential conversation.

See the [How-to-Guide: Having Helpful Conversations](#) for more guidance about supporting workers struggling with their alcohol and drug use and/or mental health.

Intoxicated workers need immediate removal from the work environment.

For more information about responding appropriately and safely to critical incidents, see:

- [How-to-Guide: Critical Alcohol and Drug Situations](#)
- [Poster: 10 Principles for Responding to Intoxicated Workers](#)

Resources and handouts are available at <https://worklife.flinders.edu.au/external-site-resources>.

References are available at <https://worklife.flinders.edu.au/references>.