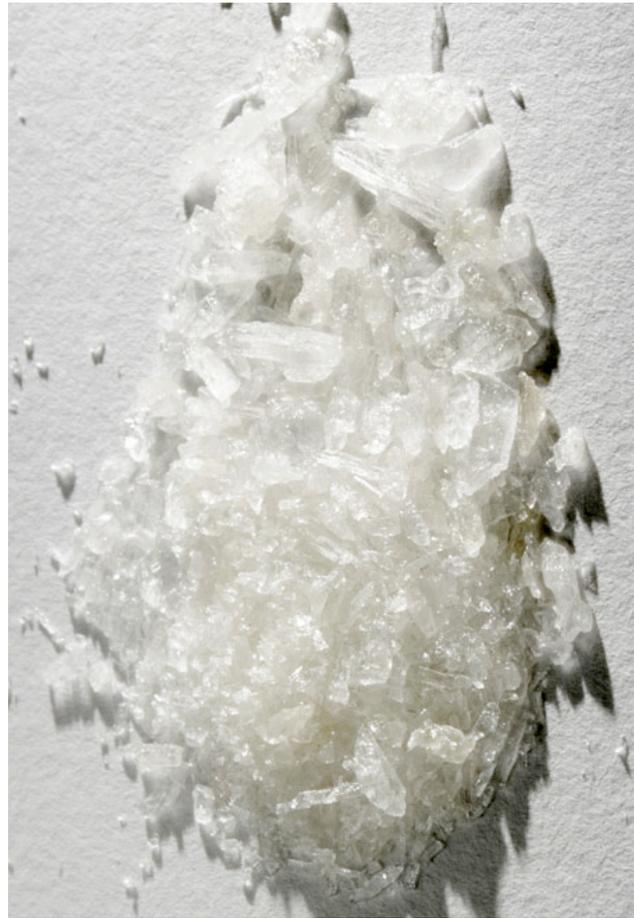


FACTS ABOUT CRYSTAL METH

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The use of crystal methamphetamine (“crystal meth”) is increasing across the Western US and Canada, and is spreading into Manitoba. The drug is relatively inexpensive, highly addictive, and has potentially serious health and social consequences. It could become one of the most dangerous illegal drugs in Manitoba. Alongside addictions professionals, Manitoba Health is informing service providers and the public about the drug through public awareness initiatives and additional educational programs.

WHAT IS CRYSTAL METH?

It’s a psycho-stimulant first used in the 1930’s as a nasal decongestant. Although it is not legally available in Canada, it is still pre- scribed in the US as a treatment for obesity. Most meth is made in illegal labs. There are more than 150 names for crystal meth, including “jib”, “speed”, “crank”, “zip”, “gak”, “billy”, “tweak” and “cristy”. It can be smoked, snorted, injected, and swallowed. The powdered form is commonly called speed, meth, or chalk. The crystal form (“crystal meth”, “ice”, “shards,” or “glass”) can be smoked. Smoking it is more convenient than injecting it, and the high from smoking is faster.

WHO IS USING IT?

The low cost and easy manufacture of methamphetamine has led to increased use throughout society. Females are at greater risk, being 30-40% more likely to use meth than males. Females often start using in hopes of losing weight and increasing their energy levels.

EFFECTS OF METH:

- Increased alertness, energy level, talkativeness, and confidence;
- Decreased need for food or sleep;
- Racing heart and chest pain;
- Increased blood pressure, and body temperature;
- Dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea;
- Physical tension, feeling “wired”, restless, and irritable;



- Uncontrolled or repetitive movement;
- Possible extreme effects include paranoid delusions, hallucinations, aggressive behaviour, and impulsive violence.
- Overdose can result in seizures, hyperthermia, fatal cardiac arrhythmias, heart attack, stroke, and death.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS:

- Premature tooth wear and discoloration, tooth cavities, tooth loss;
- Malnutrition, vitamin deficiency, weight loss;
- Speech and thought disturbances;
- Depression, sleep problems, memory loss;
- Heart, lung, liver, kidney, and nerve damage;
- Temporary or permanent psychosis (hallucinations, delusions);
- Meth-induced paranoia can result in homicidal or suicidal thoughts.

SYMPTOMS OF WITHDRAWAL FOR DEPENDENT USERS:

- Intense craving for the drug;
- Headaches, shortness of breath;
- Hunger, stomach pain;
- Convulsions;
- Fatigue, depression;
- Cognitive impairment, including impulse control problems, impaired verbal memory and decision-making, diminished experience of pleasure;
- Learning may be impaired for up to two years after discontinuation.

OTHER CONCERNS

- Children living with meth users are at increased risk of family breakdown, economic hardship, neglect, and abuse.
- Prenatal exposure may increase rates of premature delivery, congenital deformity, and altered neonatal behaviour.

- Meth can be very dangerous to children, and may cause irritability, seizures, cardiac arrhythmia, and death.
- The paranoia, irrational behaviour, and violence some meth users are prone to can create difficulties for service providers who end up in confrontation with users.
- Meth use is disinhibiting and may increase risky sexual behaviour and exposure to sexually transmitted diseases. Meth and related CNS stimulants increase libido, and may be associated with rough sex and associated abrasions and bleeding. There is an association between meth use and condom failure, and consequently increased risk of HIV transmission.
- Because drug use can be an attempt to self-medicate for an underlying mental disorder, current best practice literature indicates that diagnosis and treatment of the disorder simultaneous with substance use treatment improves outcome.

For further information about addictions and addictions services, contact Red Ladder Optimized Learning or The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. ☐

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