

As often as not, people get into drugs like ice and crystal innocently enough. They take it to party or just to taste-test whatever the media is hyping as the next **Big Thing**, drug-wise.

For some, it starts and stops there.

But for others, ice and its chemical cousins become a life-and-death ritual. And living without speed can seem a *real* dead-end existence to someone who's learned to equate feeling wired with feeling alive. Don't become one of them.

Because of all the drugs the media has picked up on since crystal meth made its first big splash in the deep end of the drug pool, probably none has produced more consistently-negative long-term effects to more people than speed.

And no matter *what* you call it, and no matter *how* it gets into your body, speed still kills. And, too often, it ruins what it doesn't kill.

And that's *not* hype. That's just the way it is.

And it's probably the way it always will be. ■

■ life • meth



This is one in a series of publications on drugs, behavior, and health published by Do It Now Foundation. Please call or write for a list of current titles, or visit our web site at www.doitnow.org.



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speed • smoke • fire

■ a do it now foundation publication by jim parker

Sometimes, it almost seems like somebody's **gotta** be making it all up. Because no sooner does the media declare last year's drug problem (GHB, Rohypnol, Special K — take your pick) permanently passé than it discovers a new mole/wrinkle on the tired face of drug abuse and proclaims it **the** problem of the new year/century/millennium.

As often as not, the new "menace" turns out to be only another blip on the great media sensationalism machine.

But by the time anyone realizes *that*, the media experts are hooking up to the next Big Thing, on "48 Hours" or "20/20," worrying out

loud about What It All Means and Where We Go From Here.

Still, sometimes the smoke the media blows on drugs turns out to be hovering over a *real* fire.

That sure turned out to be true with a smokeable new form of an old drug it labelled "ice," or "glass" when it first began to rear its ugly little head in the 1990's.

Ice *has* attracted major media notice, and it *is* living up to its billing—so far, at least—as "the crack of the 21st Century." And just like crack, it's leaving a *huge* trail of broken people in its wake, people who somehow didn't hear or believe the warnings.

That's why we put this pamphlet together: to sort the smoke from the fire on ice, whether you call it that or what it *really* is—and was all along: crystal meth.

Because the smoke that meth turns into is a real pharmacological fire—one that burns everything (and everyone) it touches.

And we don't want you to be one of them.

■ Crystal • Ice

So how are ice and meth different? They aren't.

That's because ice *is* crystal—at least, a smokeable form of crystal—first developed in South Korea and Taiwan, and introduced to the U.S. by Asian drug gangs.

■ smoke • mirrors

the smoke that meth turns into is a pharmacological **fire** that burns everything (& everyone) it touches.

Both are bootleg versions of *d-methamphetamine hydrochloride*, the most potent form of the stimulant drug group known as *amphetamines*.

For years, meth was a drug in search of a disease. After it was first synthesized in 1919, it was tried against everything from depression to decongestion. Today, it's rarely prescribed, except as an occasional short-term treatment for obesity and sleeping sickness.

That's because it blocks appetite and fatigue so well (and triggers feelings of arousal that are so intense) that uncontrolled medical use boiled over into large-scale non-medical use over the years in places as far-flung as Sweden, the United States, and Japan.

That brought crackdowns, and a gradual disappearance of most forms of legal methamphetamine.

But it's not the medical use of the drug that put the buzz back in the meth biz.

Instead, it was the reemergence of street versions of the drug, doing what meth always does best: getting the people who use it strung out—and worse.

■ Powder • Vapor

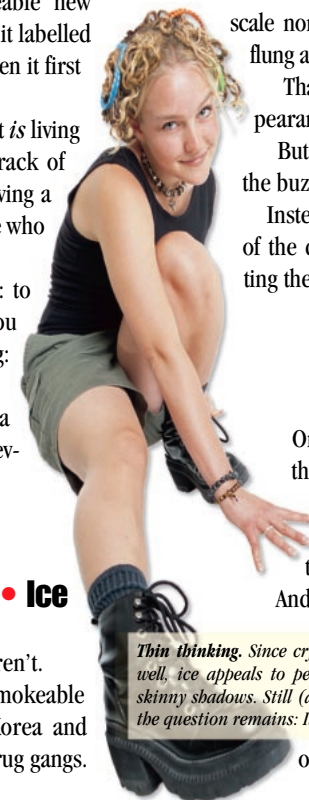
One factor in the hype surrounding ice is that the drug is smoked, just like crack cocaine.

The similarity doesn't end there.

Since ice, like crack, is absorbed through the lungs, effects are intense—and kick in fast. And even if smoking meth isn't *that* new—it was

Thin thinking. Since crystal blocks appetite so well, ice appeals to people who like to cast skinny shadows. Still (and even if thin is in), the question remains: Is ice worth the price?

reported in Hawaii as early as 1968 and elsewhere in the U.S. since the late '50s—ice *does* offer a new twist on an old recipe for trouble.



Trouble in hand. A bag of ice and a glass pipe.

Dennis Oda

For one thing, it's easier to do. In powder form, meth requires a high temperature to vaporize, so smoking never really caught on before. Converting the drug to pure crystals made it easier to melt and produce a concentrated vapor.

Not only that, but ice also tends to be less diluted than methamphetamine, due to the difficulty of "cutting" crystals with additives and bulking agents.

Still, the potency of ice only adds to a list of problems linked to methamphetamine.

And there were plenty of those, to begin with.

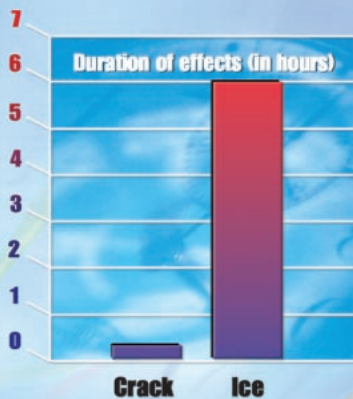
■ Actions • Hazards

No matter how they *get* to work, all forms of methamphetamine end up working in the same way in the same place, turning up the biochemistry of the brain.

Specifically, the drug increases the activity of two key neurotransmitters, *dopamine* and *epinephrine*. In low, prescribed doses (10-20 mg. taken orally), the drug unleashes a surge of energy and alertness and temporary loss of appetite.

Heartbeat and blood pressure also rise as the drug pumps up cardiac activity and constricts blood vessels.

▶ Tale of the Tape



Winner by a Nose. Since meth stays biologically active in the body longer than cocaine, effects linger longer, too.

At higher doses, activity in the brain and central nervous system jumps further.

The result: alertness, tension, and all the signs of physical and psychological arousal—from racing thoughts and rapid breathing to activation of the body's "fight or flight" response, making us ready to do or die.

But speed saves its most spectacular—and spectacularly dangerous—effects for those who smoke or inject the drug.

In fact, effects of ice are identical to those produced by injection, since smoking and shooting involve direct pathways to the brain.



Frozen smoke. When it's smoked, ice delivers a concentrated blast of meth to the brain in seconds.

Each delivers a concentrated blast of the drug in seconds, compared with the longer, slower absorption that occurs with oral use.

The effect is overwhelming: a flash of euphoria, followed by an extended period of energized alertness.

The rush is so powerful that users quickly crave it over the drug's longer-lasting stimulant action.

And *that's* when problems really get started.

■ Tweeking • Amping

Regardless of the dangers involved, there's still a lot of misinformation swirling around about ice, particularly about the duration of its effects.

Early media reports to the contrary, a single dose of ice does *not* trigger a marathon high lasting 16 hours. What reports of long-term ice intoxication *really* reflect is the increased purity of the drug and the way it drives users to take more, more often.

It's a small distinction, but important.

Because when smoked or injected, ice hits fast and hard—then fades (like other types of speed) over a period of up to eight hours.

Users frequently "chase" the high by upping their dose, sometimes to the point where they smoke continuously for days or weeks, with little food and less sleep.



Ice introduces users to meth in a way that's practically guaranteed to cause serious problems...

At the height of a typical tweeking "mission," hardcore crystal users may inject 10-12 times a day at 2-3 hour intervals. Heavy ice smokers can spend dozens of days each month amping up on ice. Tolerance builds so quickly that users end up taking massive amounts during a run, compounding the risks.

The tendency to slide into high-dose, non-stop use points up yet another danger of ice: It gets users into methamphetamine in a way that's almost *guaranteed* to cause serious problems—and worse.

■ Toxicity • Trouble

Methamphetamine troubles are legendary. They start with the physical effects of over-amping—tremors, dizziness, nausea, and rapid heartbeat—and build all the way to overdose.

And even though methamphetamine is usually less often lethal than cocaine, overdose *can* occur. It's particularly likely to occur during an extended run, when users lose track—or control—of how much they use.

Perhaps the best-known danger linked to speed is the psycho-emotional meltdown of *toxic psychosis*. Symptoms—including hallucinations, panic, and paranoia—can involve irrational, even violent behavior.

Since psychosis is related to high blood levels of methamphetamine, it often clears within a week after stopping use. However, some symptoms may persist for weeks or months. Researchers think that long-lasting episodes may be caused by damage to dopamine-producing structures in the brain.

Other risks include organ damage, malnutrition, and the general breakdown that follows driving the body faster than it was meant to go. And ice smoking causes the same sorts of lung damage seen in crack smokers.

▶ Managing a Meltdown: Getting Off Ice



Getting off ice—or any other stimulant drug—can be tricky. And staying off is trickier, still. But it can be done, and it *is* being done every day by lots of people. If *you* have a problem, you should be one of them.

Recovery starts when you admit that you're hooked. It expands as you acknowledge the needs inside you that drive the craving and stare down the emptiness and boredom that can come with finding yourself suddenly speed-free.

But how do you **beat** it? You do it in lots of ways, one at a time or all at once.

Since a big part of speed's allure derives from the physical arousal it generates, it's important to find alternative activities to trigger similar feelings—without the boom-or-bust convulsive body-mind cycles of speed. Ways that work:

▶ **Jogging.** Running is a perfect way to relieve problems. It can induce trance-like states that dissolve negative feelings, and it helps the body burn off calories and control weight—reasons some get involved with speed in the first place. Walking works just as well, but takes longer.

▶ **Meditation.** Believe it or not, meditation and other alternative-focus activities can produce effects that end up feeling pretty stimulating. Don't know how? Check out *The Relaxation Response* (by Dr. Herbert Benson) or *Creative Visualization* (by Shakti Gawain) from your local library for tips on getting started.

But *get* started—and do it now. Playing with ice is like playing with fire—except, with ice, it can take a while to know how badly you've been burned. ■

