

Message from the Minister for Mental Health

There has been a lot of discussion recently about the drug ICE or crystal methamphetamine. While the use of ICE in Victoria is low compared with other drugs such as cannabis, alcohol and tobacco, it is still cause for concern. The Brumby Government is committed to preventing drug use and ensuring that parents are readily able to access information and advice on dealing with drug issues that affect their family and friends.

Staying connected with your children, listening to their concerns and being prepared to seek help are important in dealing with drug use. Prevention of course is better than cure but help is available if you need it.

The following information will help clarify what you may have heard or read about ICE and refers you to websites and services you can contact if you want further help and assistance.

I encourage you to read this brochure, get informed and talk with your children on the issue of drug use. It is important to remember there are many excellent services where you can seek further help if you are concerned.



Hon Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Mental Health



Family Drug Helpline 1300 660 068
Monday to Friday 9am – 9pm

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format please telephone 03 9096 5275 or email icebrochure@dhs.vic.gov.au
This document is also available in pdf format on:
www.health.vic.gov.au/drugservices/

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What parents should know about ICE (Crystal methamphetamine)



What is ICE ?

Many parents are concerned about the drug ICE. This brochure is designed to provide information about ICE and where to get more information and help if you need it.

ICE is a common name for crystal methamphetamine. ICE has a stronger effect than other forms of similar drugs such as 'speed' and 'ecstasy'. It also has stronger side effects and worse after effects.

Methamphetamines are made from unlawfully obtained pharmaceutical chemicals and often 'cooked' in dangerous back yard laboratories or imported illegally.

Police reports show that ICE, like other illegal drugs, often contains a cocktail of dangerous chemicals and contaminants.

What does it look like and how is it used?

ICE appears in a crystalline form that can range from large, clear-coloured, sheet-like crystals through to a crystalline powder. It can also appear in a range of colours.

ICE is usually smoked or injected. It can also be snorted through the nose or swallowed. There are considerable risks with all methods of use.

How common is ICE?

Research on drug use among Victorian secondary school students in 2005 indicates around five per cent of students aged 12 to 17 years have used amphetamines (including ICE and the more common ecstasy and speed) in their lifetime, and four per cent in the past year. In comparison to rates of alcohol and tobacco use, this figure is low.

What are the effects?

The effects of any drug vary from person to person, depending on several factors including the size of the person, drug quantity, how it is taken and whether other drugs are taken at the same time.

ICE can bring on feelings of euphoria, energy and a sense of wellbeing, but effects also include feeling nervous, anxious, agitated, panicked and the inability to make good decisions.

After effects 'come down'

Feeling irritable, lethargic, anxious and paranoid are common experiences for people coming down after using ICE.

The more someone uses ICE, the more likely they are to experience negative effects such as anxiety, paranoia, depression, radical mood swings and violent behaviour.

What are the risks?

Dependence

People who use ICE can quickly develop physical and psychological dependence.

Once dependent or addicted to ICE, individuals find that using it becomes far more important than other activities in their life. A person can become so used to functioning with the drug in their system they may have difficulty functioning without it.

Mental health

ICE use can increase the risk of sleeplessness, anxiety, depression and paranoia. High quantities and frequent heavy use can also create a 'methamphetamine psychosis', characterised by paranoid delusions, hallucinations and bizarre, irrational, aggressive or violent behaviour.

Physical health

Very high quantities of ICE can bring on blurred vision, tremors, irregular breathing, loss of coordination and collapse. Some people have overdosed and others have experienced high body temperature and increased heart rate. There are also risks of seizures, strokes and heart failure.

Talking with your children about drugs

One of the best ways to tackle the issue of drugs with your children is to talk to them about it. Showing constant care and support for your children and their interests will create an environment where they feel safe to discuss any concerns or issues with you. By initiating a non-judgemental conversation with your child they are more likely to talk to you about what they are thinking. You may also like to seek professional advice or find out more information before you speak to your child so that you can provide them with an accurate and informed perspective.

Some points to keep in mind when talking with your children about drugs are:

1. Talk calmly to your child, take a positive approach, listen and try to understand their perspective.
2. Avoid accusations and deal with the behaviour rather than being judgmental or attacking them personally.
3. Discuss your concerns and encourage your child to come up with ways they can stop taking drugs.
4. Be prepared to seek help. Approaching drug issues with children may be easier with the help of professionals.
5. There are many services that provide advice to family and friends. These include your local doctor and community health services.
6. Approachable, well-informed staff at services such as DirectLine and Family Drug Helpline are experienced in dealing with parents and families and available to answer any questions you may have.
DirectLine provides a confidential, non-judgemental counselling and referral service, 24 hours, 7 days a week.
Family Drug Help offers a counselling and support service for people concerned about a relative or friend using drugs.
7. Further support and information about ICE can be obtained from Counselling online or the Australian Drug Foundation Drug Info Clearinghouse. Details of these services are on the back of this brochure.