

# Getting through Methamphetamine Withdrawal

Please note this factsheet is only a guide. If you are thinking about managing your methamphetamine use seek advice from your doctor to get support tailored to your needs.  
Last Reviewed: 8th April, 2020

## What is methamphetamine?

Methamphetamine is an addictive, man-made stimulant drug. There are three different forms of methamphetamine available, generally named for their appearance:

- Powder ('speed')
- Crystalline ('ice' or 'crystal')
- Base (a paste-like form)

## What is methamphetamine withdrawal?

Methamphetamine withdrawal is a group of symptoms that occur after stopping or decreasing the amount of methamphetamine you use. Methamphetamine withdrawal symptoms may be physical or emotional, and are temporary.

## What to expect in withdrawal

Different people will experience methamphetamine withdrawal differently. Some people may find stopping methamphetamine use more challenging than others. If you are finding methamphetamine withdrawal hard see your doctor to get support.

### *How long does withdrawal last?*

Methamphetamine withdrawal starts in the first 24 hours after stopping use. The 'comedown phase' or 'crash' happens when the effects of methamphetamine start to wear off, and can last up to 3 days. People who are dependent on methamphetamine may experience withdrawal symptoms for longer than this. Withdrawal symptoms usually disappear after 2 weeks.

### *What are the common methamphetamine withdrawal symptoms?*

Common physical symptoms of methamphetamine withdrawal include:

- Tremor
- Nausea and vomiting
- Feeling hungry
- Rapid or irregular heart beat
- Muscle tension or aches
- Sleep difficulties and sleep disturbance
- Fever
- Sweating

Common emotional symptoms of methamphetamine withdrawal include:

- Anxiety, agitation or irritability
- Poor concentration
- Paranoia
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there)

## What are the benefits of quitting methamphetamine?

Quitting methamphetamine has immediate and long-term health benefits. Continued use of methamphetamine can increase your risk for problems like heart issues (e.g. irregular heart beat), muscle tissue breakdown, seizures, aggressive behaviour and symptoms of psychosis. After you stop using methamphetamine and as your body recovers you will notice that your sleep patterns improve, your energy levels get better and your mood settles.

## How can I manage my methamphetamine use?

**Step 1:** Get help by talking to your doctor. You can talk to your doctor about where you would like to go through withdrawal (e.g. detox or at home), and medications that might help you to manage your withdrawal symptoms. Some people who use methamphetamine regularly may need to go to a residential detox, but many will be able to detox safely and effectively at home with support (e.g. drug and alcohol counselling).

**Step 2:** Talk to someone and get support. The following services are available to you:

- **Drug and Alcohol Counselling:** Call the *National Alcohol and Other Drug Helpline* (1800 250 015) to be linked in with counselling in your area
- **Online Counselling:** Head to *Counselling Online* ([www.counsellingonline.org.au](http://www.counsellingonline.org.au)) for web-based drug and alcohol counselling.
- **Peer Support:** Consider getting peer support from *Narcotics Anonymous* ([www.na.org.au](http://www.na.org.au)) or *SMART Recovery* ([www.smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au](http://www.smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au))

**Step 3:** Get rid of any remaining methamphetamine and cut ties with your dealer to reduce your chances of a lapse.

## What strategies can I use to manage my methamphetamine use?

- Stay positive and be kind to yourself while you are experiencing withdrawal
- Spend time with friends and family who support you
- Avoid situations where you used to use methamphetamine and begin new activities to replace methamphetamine use
- Set goals and rewards for using the money you save by quitting
- Good **nutrition**, **exercise** and **sleep** will help your body recover and ease some of the discomfort caused by withdrawal symptoms.
- Warm baths, massage, light exercise and deep breathing can help with aches and pains
- Sleep difficulties are common in withdrawal so follow these tips to help you sleep:
  - Try to go to bed around the same time each night, and set an alarm to wake at the same time each day
  - Go to sleep when you feel tired
  - If you do not fall asleep within 30 minutes of being in bed get back up and return to bed only when you are feeling tired
- Expect to have cravings to use methamphetamine; they are a difficult but normal part of withdrawal. Use the 4 D's approach anytime you experience cravings:
  - **Delay** acting on the urge to use methamphetamine and remind yourself why you wanted to stop in the first place. The urge will pass after a while on its own.
  - **Deep breathe.** Take long, slow breaths in and out. Repeat this three times.
  - **Do something else.** Take your mind off methamphetamine by doing something else: put on some music, keep your hands busy, or go for a walk
  - **Drink water.** Sip water slowly to beat cravings for methamphetamine. You'll feel better both physically and mentally.
- Most relapses occur within the first week after quitting. Having a specific plan or activity for each day can help you get through the withdrawal period and stay on track.
- If you have a lapse, keep yourself safe by practicing good hygiene, and use needle syringe programs and safe injecting rooms. Also make sure you let someone know you are using methamphetamine so they can call for help if you need it.
- Consider getting support for any stresses in your life. Stress can make your withdrawal worse than it actually is. Talk to your doctor or consider getting help from a counsellor.
- Know that sometimes people undertake a number of withdrawal attempts before succeeding. If you keep this in mind and keep going you will succeed.