

# INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY

AUGUST 31

# FACTSHEET

## METHAMPHETAMINE

### WHAT IS METHAMPHETAMINE?

Methamphetamine (or methylamphetamine hydrochloride) is a central nervous system (CNS) stimulant.

It is generally available in four forms:

1. Speed – which comes in powder form and is typically of low purity
2. Base – a damp oily substance with white to yellow or brown colour (also known as “pure”, “paste”, “wax”)
3. Pills – usually contain only a small dose of methamphetamine
4. Crystal – purest form of methamphetamine and has a translucent to white crystalline appearance. The crystal form of the drug is also known as Ice.

Meth can be swallowed, snorted, smoked or injected, with each of these methods having different risks. For example, swallowing makes it difficult to work out the dose and when the effects will be felt.

Smoking is harsh on the lungs and risks burning them. Injecting any drug attracts risks of injection-related injury and diseases including blood borne viruses (e.g. HIV, hepatitis C).

Smoking and injecting meth can have a nearly instantaneous onset of its effects which might account for the higher likelihood for methamphetamine dependence among people who smoke and/or inject ice.

### SIGNS OF OVERDOSE

Because of its high purity, meth overdose, or toxicity, can occur even with small doses, especially when mixed with other drugs. The greatest concern in meth overdose is the risk of seizures, stroke and heart attack. Emergency presentations featuring meth toxicity are less common than meth psychosis. However, risks to the cardiovascular system from high levels are significant, especially when there is a pre-existing health problem.

Some signs of overdose can include:

PHYSICAL SIGNS	PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS
Hot, flushed, sweaty skin Severe headaches Chest pain Unsteady walking Rigid muscles or tremors, spasms, jerky movements Movement of the limbs, and seizures Difficulty breathing	Psychotic symptoms in individuals with no prior mental illness Severe agitation or panic Altered mental state (e.g. confusion, disorientation)

More information and fact sheets can be found at [www.overdoseday.com](http://www.overdoseday.com)

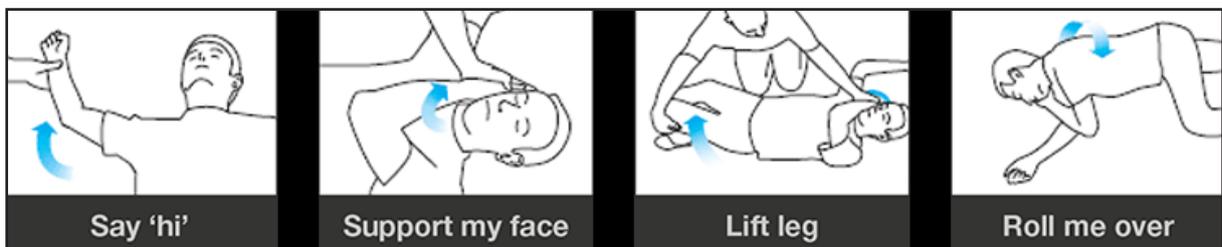
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## OVERDOSE RESPONSE

If you think someone has overdosed, please consider the following:

- Before you act, check for dangers such as needles
- Seek medical attention
- Move the person to a quiet, safe room away from bystanders, noise, excessive light, heat and other stimulation
- If confused or panicking, try to reassure the person
- If overheating, try to cool the person down by loosening outer clothing or putting a wet towel on the back of the neck or under their arms
- If you can't get a response or the person is unconscious, put them in the recovery position



Source: <http://www.prenoxadinjection.com/>

- If muscle spasms or seizures occur, remove anything from the immediate environment that might cause injury

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## WHAT NOT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A SUSPECTED OVERDOSE:

- Do NOT leave the person alone
- Do NOT give the person anything to eat or drink, or try to induce vomiting

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