

## STAYING SAFE: METHAMPHETAMINE & OVERDOSE

### HOW DOES METHAMPHETAMINE (INCLUDING 'ICE') OVERDOSE OCCUR?

An overdose can occur when a person has taken a drug and experiences negative effects, as the body is unable to handle the dosage taken. Methamphetamine overdose (also known as toxicity) can result in complications such as heat stroke, heart and other organ failure, seizures and/or possible death.

Crystal methamphetamine ('ice') overdoses can occur with any dosage taken, depending on a person's prior health status, tolerance and whether ice has been taken with other substances. Ice is often purer than other forms of methamphetamine (base or speed), which means that it can be more potent and overdoses can happen even if someone has taken a small amount.

### SIGNS OF METHAMPHETAMINE OVERDOSE

Learning the signs of overdose can potentially save a life.

Signs of overdose include:



Hot, flushed or  
sweaty skin



Severe  
headaches



Chest  
pain



Unsteady  
walking



Difficulty  
breathing



Psychotic  
symptoms



Feeling panicked or  
very agitated



Confusion or  
disorientation



Tremors, spasms, jerky  
movements or seizures

### WHAT TO DO IF AN OVERDOSE OCCURS

Call an ambulance (000) as soon as possible during an overdose. Remember, paramedics do not involve police unless the person is a danger to themselves or to others.

Responding to an overdose:

- Check the environment around the person and remove any needles or other objects that may cause injury

- Call an ambulance, and give them as much detail as you can about your location as well as exactly what was taken and when (if you know)
- If possible, move the person to a quiet room away from loud noises, heat and bystanders
- If they are overheating, loosen their outer clothing, fan them or place ice or cool washcloths on their neck and under their arms
- Stay calm and reassure them that they are not alone
- If a seizure occurs, remove any objects nearby that may cause injury
- If the person is unresponsive or unconscious move them into the recovery position.

### PUTTING SOMEONE IN THE RECOVERY POSITION



1 Kneel beside the person and straighten their arms and legs.



2 Fold the arm closest to you over their chest, and place the other arm at a right angle to their body.



3 Get the leg closest to you and bend the knee. Supporting their head and neck, take the bent knee closest to you and roll them away from you.



4 Adjust the upper leg, so that the hip and knee are bent at right angles. Tilt the head back and make sure the airways are clear and open.

### REDUCING THE RISK OF AN OVERDOSE

**If you are using methamphetamine, below are some tips that may be helpful in lowering the risk of an overdose**

- Do not take multiple substances at once - use one drug at a time
- If it has been a long time since the last use of crystal methamphetamine, take a smaller dose and see how you feel before taking more
- Make sure you have a contact you trust to call on, in case you're not feeling well.
- Access local supervised injecting clinics if possible
- Always try to follow other harm reduction practices such as: planning breaks between uses, taking frequent sips of water and having snacks available.

## REFERENCES:

1. <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/meth-treatment/overdose>
2. <http://www.penington.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/SUS06-Overdose.pdf>
3. Positive Choices. (2020). How to put someone in the recovery position. Retrieved from: <https://positivechoices.org.au/teachers/how-to-put-someone-in-the-recovery-position>