

CRYSTAL METH

The body reacts to crystal meth the same way it reacts to danger. Crystal floods the body with adrenaline – the same hormone that prepares it for emergencies. Adrenaline gives a super charge of strength and endurance so the body can deal with danger and injury. The effects of crystal are easier to understand if you think of them as the body's strategy for self defense. Here are some of the ways that crystal meth may affect your body .

METH HELPLINE

888-9NO-METH (888-966-6384)

pscrystalmethtaskforce.org

GREATER PALM SPRINGS CRYSTAL METH TASK FORCE

c/o Desert AIDS Project, P.O. Box 2890
1695 North Sunrise Way Palm Springs, CA 92263
760-323-2118

AIDS Hotline: 800-922-2437

Alcoholics Anonymous (24 Hours): 760-568-4004

Alternatives: 800-DIAL GAY (800-342-5429)
(GLBT drug/alcohol treatment)

Betty Ford Center at Eisenhower: 800-854-9211

Desert AIDS Project: 760-323-2118
HIV/Syphilis Testing

The Hacienda Valdez: 760-329-2959
(Women's drug/alcohol residential treatment)

Michael's House: 760-320-5486
(Men's drug/alcohol treatment)

Narcotics Anonymous: 760-346-5800

The Ranch: 760-329-2924
(Men's residential drug/alcohol treatment)

Riverside County Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Cathedral City 760-770-2222
Indio 760-347-0754

Riverside County Department of Public Health (STD Clinic)
760-778-2210

CRYSTAL METH ANONYMOUS MEETINGS

Mondays, 7:30 p.m.

Methodist Church, 1555 East Alejo, Palm Springs

Thursdays, 6:30 p.m.

The Studios, 560 Grenfall Road, Palm Springs

Fridays, 7:30 p.m.

Methodist Church, 1555 East Alejo, Palm Springs

Produced in collaboration with



Desert AIDS Project
AT THE GREENBURG-PEET CAMPUS

YOUR BODY ON METH

DENTAL AND ORAL HEALTH

Teeth and gums need blood to stay healthy. Crystal causes the vessels that supply blood to oral tissues to shrink up. Reduced blood supply causes tissues to break down. With repeated shrinking, the blood vessels don't recover and tissues die. Crystal also causes dry mouth. Saliva neutralizes acids in the mouth. Less saliva means more acid. Acids eat away minerals in tooth enamel and cause holes or weak spots that turn into cavities.

THE KIDNEYS

The kidneys filter the blood and get rid of fluid waste through urine. Crystal is filtered by, and then excreted through, the kidneys. Kidneys also balance the acid level in your body's fluids. Crystal constricts blood vessels in the kidneys. With less blood flow, the kidneys produce less urine. Toxic waste gets recycled back into the bloodstream. When toxic blood reaches the brain, you can get headaches and suffer confusion. Urine becomes very concentrated and sits in the bladder. This can result in bladder infections, and the kidneys can get inflamed.

THE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

The lungs transfer oxygen from the outside air to the bloodstream. Blood carries oxygen to every cell and tissue in the body. Cells need a constant supply of oxygen and nutrients to make energy. Crystal relaxes air passages and opens them up. This increases the intake of oxygen so the body can fight or run faster. The concern is, materials used to cut crystal can block blood vessels in the lungs, and long term use can permanently reduce the amount of air the lungs can take in.

THE LIVER

The liver is the body's largest internal organ. Along with the kidneys, the liver clears the blood of drugs and poisons that may otherwise build up in the body. Crystal competes with other drugs to get broken down in the liver. The liver cannot break down the overload of

toxic substances that build up in the bloodstream. This leads to dangerous blood interactions and stimulation overdose. Overdose can mean a sudden and dangerous increase in blood pressure, causing a severe lack of oxygen to the brain. Body temperature can go up to dangerous levels. Sweating (which cools down the body) sometimes does not happen in stimulant overdose. The user may see spots (due to pressure on the nerves in the eye) or pass out. Chances of heart attack, stroke or coma may increase.

THE BRAIN

To change the way a person thinks, feels, and sees, crystal must first pass through the (BBB) blood brain barrier. When crystal crosses the BBB, several brain chemicals called neurotransmitters are released into the bloodstream. Neurotransmitters send "emergency alert" messages to the heart, the digestive system, kidneys, lungs, and the glands that make the body's hormones.

THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

The job of the nervous system is to carry messages from your brain to the rest of your body. When you use crystal, your nervous system shifts into high gear. The brain floods your body with "danger messages." Your body responds immediately to what it thinks is a threat. It prepares to fight or run away. Common body responses to perceived danger include: pupils get larger to let in more light; hair stands on end (goose bumps); blood vessels just under the skin constrict; body temperature goes up.

CRYSTAL AND SEX

When it comes to sex, crystal is a drug of contradictions. Some men use crystal to boost their sex drive, prolong sex play and delay orgasm. But many men also experience the inability to maintain an erection. For men who do maintain an erection for a long period of time, the delay of orgasm can

last too long and become painful. The sexual effects of crystal are probably related to the way hormones and neurotransmitters – two types of body chemicals – interact with each other.

Generally speaking, sexually charged images, thoughts and places cause the body to produce sex hormones – chemicals that increase arousal and excitement, Crystal, on the other hand, causes release of neurotransmitters – nervous system chemicals that boost energy and concentration. If a person uses crystal in a sexually charged environment, neurotransmitters combine with sex hormones to boost sexual arousal and performance. But over the course of the high, levels of these chemicals shift and change. The result is not always ideal. High levels of certain neurotransmitters actually impede arousal and performance. The result is the inability to maintain an erection and delayed orgasm.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that men who use crystal meth are more than twice as likely to be infected with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases as non-users. Additionally, research has indicated that for people infected with HIV, even occasional use of crystal can lead to lapses in taking HIV medications, weight loss and vitamin depletion.

Through prolonged sexual activity, tissues of the penis, anus and throat can get damaged. If damaged tissue is exposed to blood or semen, it's much easier for HIV or other harmful organisms to enter the body. Sharing needles also exposes the user to HIV and Hepatitis C co-infection.

In spite of having "hot sex" while on crystal, many men end up feeling socially isolated, disconnected, distrustful and empty.