

Why do people use crystal methamphetamine ('ice')?

There is no single reason why people use crystal methamphetamine ('ice'). Usually several things act in combination. Regardless of why someone starts to use ice, there is a risk of it becoming a problem. Common reasons for using **stimulant** drugs such as ice include:

- To fit in/feel part of a social group
- To reduce inhibitions and increase confidence
- Out of curiosity or to experiment
- To escape reality
- Out of boredom
- To manage mental health issues (e.g. low mood, **anxiety, depression**) and the impacts of trauma
- To forget or help cope with problems (e.g. unemployment, unstable housing, financial difficulties, lack of social support, stress)
- To enhance work performance
- To enhance sexual experiences and intimacy



Social networks and activities can also play a role in facilitating ice use. People who use ice often have friends, family or partners who use the same drugs and frequently spend time in places where these types of drugs are accessible and normalised (e.g. parties and nightclubs).

Although many people report that they use ice to feel more confident or lift their mood, in reality taking **methamphetamines** like ice often increases nervousness, agitation and can trigger **anxiety** attacks. During the 'comedown' phase of the drug wearing off it is common for people to feel down or depressed. Read these tips for managing nervousness and dealing with low mood after taking ice.

People often use ice with other drugs such as:

- alcohol
- cannabis
- tobacco
- ecstasy

Using different drugs in combination can alter the effects of these drugs in unexpected ways and makes their use even more dangerous. Read more about what happens when you use ice with other drugs.

Why do young people use crystal methamphetamine 'ice'?

Some common reasons why young people use drugs such as ice includes:

"Someone had some and I just thought I'd try it"

"I always wanted to try that stuff"

"All my friends were doing it so I thought 'why not?'"

"It made me feel really good"

"All my problems from school, at home and in life just went away"

Learn more about illegal drug use in young people via [the Positive Choices portal](#).

Tips for being assertive

Although it varies from person to person situations where you have to disagree with others or refuse something can sometimes feel awkward and difficult to handle.

It may help to know that by not taking drugs you are in the majority. Most young people in Australia do not use ice.



Only



students aged 12-17 years have used

methamphetamine, including ice in the past month

Source: Australian secondary school students alcohol and drug (ASSAD) survey 2017

Here are a few options to help you deal with situations where you may be inclined or pressured to take ice.

- **Option 1:** Stay away
- **Option 2:** Provide excuses
- **Option 3:** Leave the situation
- **Option 4:** Be assertive
- **Option 5:** Use the "Broken Record" technique.

Option 1: Stay away

If you don't think you will be able to resist the offer or pressure to take drugs then it may be best to stay away from that situation or group of people. Good friends should respect your decision not to use drugs. Try to hang out with people who share similar interests and do not use drugs. It may be a good idea to find new interests and meet some new people.

Option 2: Provide excuses

You can simply make excuses to get out of the uncomfortable situation. For example:

- *"No thanks, I'm leaving soon"*
- *"Last time I had it, I didn't feel too well"*
- *"I'm being picked up soon"*
- *"I can't tonight; I'm on medication"*
- *"No thanks, I just want to make sure everyone else stays safe".*

Option 3: Leave the situation

If you are offered ice, you can just give your excuses and go. This doesn't mean you need to leave a party, or the social situation that you are in, but it may be best to walk away from that person. You can leave by saying: "I need to go to the bathroom" or "Is that Jason over there? I'm just going to say hello; I haven't seen him in ages".

Option 4: Be assertive

Being **assertive** involves clearly stating your thoughts, needs and wishes whilst still remaining tolerant and respectful of others. Learning to be assertive takes practice, so don't be disheartened if it doesn't come straight away.

Assertive communication includes three steps:

1. **Giving your answer**
2. **Stating your reason**
3. **Showing understanding.**

The following is an example of assertive communication:

Toby: *Just have a little bit, your parents will never know.*

Sophie: *No thanks, I don't want to risk it. They probably won't find out but if they do I'll be grounded for life.*

Providing reasons for your decision makes it very difficult for people to continue exerting pressure. There will be the occasional person who will keep trying, but most people will stop. Usually people will see that it's a waste of their time and will drop the subject pretty quickly.

Being comfortable with your decision will come across in your body language. You can communicate assertively by:

- Keeping a clear firm voice, speaking clearly and deliberately
- Maintaining eye contact
- Facing the person with your body so that you do not look like you are hiding
- Having a facial expression that says what you mean.

Option 5: Use the "Broken Record" technique

This just involves continually saying "no" in the politest possible way. You just say it over and over again and never change your tune:

Toby: *Come on, just take some with me.*

Sophie: *No thanks, I don't really want to.*

Toby: *Just this time?*

Sophie: *No thanks, not even once.*

Toby: *But you're normally so fun!*

Sophie: *Not tonight. No thanks.*

Toby: *Go on...*

Sophie: *Yeah, but no thanks, I don't feel like it.*

Key Sources

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