

# COPING WITH ICE

## A GUIDE FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS



Having a family member or friend who uses ice (crystal methamphetamine) can be stressful and worrying. It's normal to feel helpless, frustrated, anxious and upset. But you are not alone and help is available. This brochure provides some information and advice to help you. You can find more information and support through the services listed on the following page.

### UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS

Drugs can affect people differently, but some of the effects of ice can include:

- Feelings of pleasure and confidence
- Increased alertness and energy
- Repetition of simple actions like itching and scratching
- Enlarged pupils and dry mouth
- Teeth grinding and excessive sweating
- Fast heart rate and breathing
- Reduced appetite
- Feelings of paranoia or anxiety
- Agitation or aggressive behaviour

It can take several days to 'come down' from using ice. The following effects may be experienced during this time:

- Difficulty sleeping and exhaustion
- Headaches, dizziness and blurred vision
- Paranoia, hallucinations and confusion
- Irritability and feeling 'down'

### DEPENDENCE

People who regularly use ice can quickly become dependent on it. They may feel they need to use ice to go about their normal activities like working, studying and socialising, or just to get through the day.

Some people who regularly use ice may start to feel less enjoyment with everyday activities. They can get stressed easily and their moods go up and down quite quickly. These changes can lead to longer term problems with anxiety and depression. People may feel these effects for at least several weeks or months after they give up ice.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### LISTEN

If your family member or friend wants to tell you something about their situation, listen carefully without getting annoyed or upset. Let them speak without interruption. After they have finished speaking, repeat back to them what you have heard and understood so they can explain any misunderstandings.

Don't try to solve their problem. Real, long-term change will only happen when they take responsibility for their actions and deal with the consequences.

### ENCOURAGE CHANGE

A person using ice needs to be ready to change before they can enter the recovery process. But you can help promote change by asking calm, respectful questions such as:

- "What do you like about using ice?"
- "What don't you like?"
- "Where does that leave you?"

Try to avoid pushing for answers. It's okay to leave the questions hanging there.

Choose a time to talk when they are relaxed and aren't affected by ice.

### SET BOUNDARIES

Communicate rules about what is and isn't acceptable behaviour in your home and the consequences for breaking these rules. Work out your limits, be clear and direct, and stick to what you say.

## HELP THEM TO BE RESPONSIBLE

It would be natural for you to try and protect your family member or friend from the problems caused by their ice use. But you aren't helping them (or yourself) by 'cleaning up' the mess they make. For example, if they want you to pay a fine to keep them out of court, think about these questions:

- Who has been fined?
- If you pay it this time will it stop them doing it again?
- Will you pay their next fine?
- What are you teaching them by paying the fine?

## FIND TREATMENT OPTIONS

There are many treatment and support options available. Different approaches work for different people at different times. Sometimes a person isn't ready to stop using ice yet, but treatment options that focus on reducing the harms may be helpful.

To talk about the best options for your family member or friend contact DirectLine on **1800 888 236** or visit [www.directline.org.au](http://www.directline.org.au)

## ACKNOWLEDGE THE SMALL CHANGES

It can be hard to stay positive when someone you love is struggling with the effects of ice and all the issues that using it can cause. But try to acknowledge the positive steps you all make to deal with these challenges.

## SUPPORT FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

Support for you and your family is very important. It can be particularly hard for you when the person using ice is not ready to change their behaviour. Even when they do enter recovery, this can take a long time and there can be many setbacks along the way.

Remember the person using ice is the only person who can change their behaviour. What you can control is how you deal with the situation, so looking after yourself is a really important part of helping the person using ice and helping your family.

You could also consider talking with a friend, talking to a counsellor or joining a support group.

Further information and support are available from the organisations listed in the next column.

## COPING WITH SOMEONE'S BAD REACTION TO ICE

### STAY CALM

- Move slowly and try not to make too much eye contact.
- Give the person space and don't crowd them.
- Keep your voice low, calm and steady.
- Move children away.
- Make the area as safe as you can, remove dangerous objects.
- Don't ask too many questions. Say things like, "I am not angry with you, I just want to make sure you are safe."
- Try to use the person's name. For example, "Jason, can you tell me what is going on for you?"

### REASSURE

- Be supportive. Tell them that they will be okay, and that what they're feeling will pass when the ice wears off.
- Help them calm down by moving them to a quiet place where they can rest.
- Listen to them and respond with calming comments. This isn't a time to argue.

### RESPOND

- Call an ambulance by dialling triple zero (000) if the person has the following symptoms:
  - Racing heart beat and chest pain
  - Breathing problems
  - Fits or uncontrolled jerking
  - Extreme agitation, confusion or clumsiness
  - Sudden, severe headache
  - UnconsciousnessAmbulance officers don't need to involve the police.
- If the person becomes violent or threatens to hurt themselves or someone else, move yourself and others to a safe place and call the police by dialling triple zero (000).



FDH is a program of share

Support for family members and friends who are concerned about a loved one's alcohol and other drug use. T: **1300 660 068**



Healthy people. Strong communities.

Information about alcohol and other drugs. [druginfo.adf.org.au](http://druginfo.adf.org.au) T: **1300 85 85 84**



24-hour, 7-day counselling, information and referral to other services including treatment. T: **1800 888 236**

