**Frequently asked questions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Has there been a dramatic increase in the number of people using methamphetamines?** |
| Answer | In Western Australia most people don’t use amphetamines. In 2013, 3.8% of Western Australians, aged 14 years and over had recently used amphetamines. This research did show however, that Western Australia has higher rates of use compared to the rest of Australia, 3.8% compared to 2.1%.  Western Australia has generally followed national trends, with some positives, such as overall use declining over the past decade, with the rate of use dropping from 6% to 3.8%.  More recently there has been an increase in people seeking treatment where the primary drug of concern is amphetamines and the rate of hospitalisations for amphetamine-related problems has also increased.  So what has changed? There has been a significant increase in users reporting they are now using more frequently and have switched to the more potent form, methamphetamine. More frequent use of a more potent form of amphetamine has led to users experiencing increased problems and harm.  For anyone concerned about their own or another person’s methamphetamine use call the Meth Helpline on 1800 874 878. her person’s methamphetamine use call the Meth Helpline on 1800 874 878. |
|  |  |
| **Question** | **How do you talk to and support a family member or a friend you think they might have a problem with methamphetamine use?** |
| Answer | **Get the facts**   * Call the Meth Helpline 1800 874 878. They will help you to clarify exactly what  your concerns are and assist in planning the steps needed to address the problem.   **Maintain honest and open communication**   * Choose an appropriate time to talk free of distractions and when they are not intoxicated. * Try to remain calm and stick to the point you wish to get across. Listen carefully without being judgemental. * Be clear and honest about your feelings, let them know how their drug use is affecting you. * Use “I” statements instead of “you” statements. For example, try “I’m really worried about” instead of “you should…”   **Negotiate and shift guidelines**   * Talk through with your partner/others involved and make decisions about what you are and aren’t prepared to accept. * Allow your friend/family member to experience the consequences of their behaviour. * Don’t make ultimatums that you aren’t prepared to enforce.   **Support and encourage positive behaviour**   * Encourage the person to develop supportive networks. * Congratulate them when they achieve their goals.   **Look after yourself**   * Family and friends can experience a range of emotions as a result of someone else’s drug use and can be in more crisis than the user themselves. It’s important to find ways of coping with stress and to access information and support from services who understand. |
|  |  |
| **Question** | **What are the signs that someone could be using Methamphetamine?** |
| Answer | * Relationship problems * Changes to eating patterns leading to poor nutrition * Sleep disturbance * Mood swings * Explosive outbursts * Reduced interaction with family * Trouble with the police * Sudden change of friends * Unexplained need for money * Declining school/work performance. |
|  |  |
| **Question** | **What kind of information or support can a counsellor from the Meth Helpline provide?** |
| Answer | Each individual caller is different so the counsellor will find out what has been going on for people, what sort of issues they’ve been dealing with/ what their concerns are first of all. They then provide some information and education for example, what are the common signs and symptoms of meth use, what types of treatment are available. Treatment matching and referral to local services in their area for ongoing face to face support. The counsellors will meet each caller with where they at so even if people are not sure what they need when they call, we can help them to figure out what their next step could be |
|  |  |
| **Question** | **What are the health effects and effects of methamphetamine use?** |
| Answer | All drugs including amphetamines will affect each person differently depending on the persons characteristics (such as physical size, gender, mood, diet, fitness, age, expectations and health), the drug itself (such as the amount used and its purity), and how it is taken and the environment a person is in when using the drug.  Short term effects at higher doses include:   * Pale skin. * Feelings of being powerful or superior. * Repetitive movement. * Irregular breathing. * Very rapid or irregular heartbeat. * Jaw clamping/teeth grinding. * Panic attacks.   Long term effects in addition to the short term effects include:   * Malnutrition and weight loss. * Reduced resistance to infection. * Violent behaviour. * Emotional disturbances. * Periods of psychosis. * Delusional thoughts and behaviour. * Mood swings.   The effects of methamphetamine include anxiety, depression, paranoia, aggression and psychotic symptoms. Methamphetamine also increases the risk of mental health problems, especially in people with an existing mental health condition or vulnerability to mental health problems. |
|  |  |
| **Question** | **What is the law regarding amphetamine use?** |
| Answer | In Western Australia, under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1981, it is illegal to use, possess, manufacture or supply amphetamines. Offences under this Act carry heavy fines and/or prison sentences. Penalties range from a $2,000 fine and/or two years in prison to a $100 000 fine and/or imprisonment for 25 years. A person convicted of a drug offence can receive a criminal record, which can lead to difficulties in getting a job, health insurance, credit and/or visas for overseas travel. |
|  |  |
| **Question** | **Can you overdose from using methamphetamines?** |
| Answer | Yes overdose from methamphetamine use can occur, usually from the drug’s stimulating effects. It can cause strokes, heart failure, seizures and death. It is normally referred to as amphetamine toxicity.  Signs that someone may be experiencing a stimulant toxicity Include:   * Hyperactivity/sweating * Chest pain/pounding chest * Severe headache * Difficulty passing urine * Raised temperature * Convulsions * Shaking/trembling/spasms * Disorientation * Rapid breathing/ feeling that you can’t breathe * Paranoid, delusion, irritable, anxious or psychotic   If you think someone is having an overdose call an ambulance (000) immediately. Remember police will not attend overdoses unless there is a death or ambulance staff are threatened. |
|  |  |