

INJECTING ICE IN THE COUNTRY

Healthier Approaches

WHAT IS ICE?

In the Needle and Syringe Program (NSP), you're likely to come into contact with clients using ice in combination with other drugs. Drugs are classified according to how they affect the central nervous system (the network of nerve tissues that controls the activities of the body including the brain and spinal cord), and the related impact they have on mood and functioning.

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Classification of drugs:

- **Stimulants or “uppers”** - caffeine, nicotine, cocaine and methamphetamine.
- **Depressants or “downers”** - alcohol, cannabis, sleeping pills and tranquillizers like valium, morphine, codeine and heroin.
- **Hallucinogens or “trippers”** - LSD, mescaline, magic mushrooms and ketamine.
- **Mood stabilisers** - lithium and antidepressants.

The impact that these substances have on the individual vary, depending on:

- How much of the substance/s the person is using.
- How often the person is using.
- How long the person has been using the substance.
- What other substances the person is using at the same time.
- The context in which the substance is being used.
- The health and medical history of the person using the substance.
- The method of use (smoking, drinking, snorting and/or injecting).

What’s different about ice?

Ice is a powerful and potent stimulant drug. Stimulants come in a range of forms, the most widely used being caffeine and nicotine.

Ice is a particular concern due to its:

- Purity levels.
- Longer period of intoxication.
- Longer and severe withdrawal periods.

- Higher risk of dependence.
- Association with risk-taking behaviours.
- Social and psychological impacts.

In low doses ice can elevate a person’s mood and provide them with the energy and concentration required to focus and stay on task. In larger doses people can experience confusion, paranoia, hyperactivity and irritability.

Summary

Ice is a very strong stimulant. Users report feeling amazing euphoria, energy and confidence. It is a drug that has a significantly long-lasting and difficult withdrawal period. You may be familiar with some of the impacts from your work at the NSP. Clients who come into NSPs to access injecting equipment are likely to have been using for some time. Generally, the longer people use, the more likely that their overall health is compromised.

NSP clients who inject ice could be experiencing dependency issues and will benefit from knowing what services are available to support them. They will also benefit from understanding the effects of different types of drugs. This will support them to make informed decisions about the risks of injecting ice and ways to reduce those risks.

Please consider contacting your local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation for additional services and supports for your Aboriginal clients, or visit www.vaccho.org.au.

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