

Crystal:

What you need to know.

What is Crystal?

(AKA: Tina, crank, crissy, speed, meth, tweek)

Crystal is an amphetamine — a synthetic stimulant that excites the brain and the central nervous system.

Crystal increases the release of dopamine in your body — the chemical that sends pleasure messages to the brain.

Crystal is most often found as an odorless off-white or white powder but can also be found in pill form, capsules, or in crystal.

Methods of Ingestion

How you take crystal affects how high you get.

- Smoking
- Injecting

These are the fastest and most intense highs, and also the most dangerous and addictive.

Other ways to take crystal include

- Swallowing
- Snorting
- Booty bumps (inserting into your anus)

Why is crystal so popular?

Some of the more common reasons are:

- The desire to have lots of sex for a long time with multiple partners
- The ability to dance for hours on end
- To accomplish dull tasks
- To get a longer lasting high
- To get a cheaper high
- To lose sexual inhibitions; for example, to have sex with men if you normally don't, to have aggressive or submissive sex, or to bottom

Crystal may be used for other reasons that are not so easily apparent:

- **Loneliness:** You may feel isolated; crystal is often a social experience.
- **Depression:** Feeling sad, empty or incomplete inside is a big reason you might turn to crystal, or any substance, to change how you are feeling.
- **The desire to connect with others:** It may seem easier to meet or feel close with other men when on crystal.
- **Body image:** Crystal may make you feel good about your body.

What happens?

Crystal use often begins recreationally, enhancing sexual experiences and dancing or other social activities. However, crystal is extremely addictive.

Crystal can elevate your mood, induce euphoria, increase alertness, reduce fatigue, increase energy levels, and suppress appetite.

It also increases movement and speech, and can provide a sense of increased power and a desire to be sexual.

Many describe it as “feeling invincible and feeling like the life of the party.”

Coming down from the high (“crashing”) can often include total physical and mental exhaustion, severe depression, and extended psychosis.

Overdosing can dramatically affect your breathing and in some cases may stop your breathing.

Some symptoms of an overdose include severe chest pain, convulsions, and vomiting. Overdose can result in heart attacks, strokes, and death.

Long-term or heavy use can lead to extended psychosis, neurological damage, chronic depression, liver and kidney damage, and other health-related problems.

Crystal and Sex

Some users who have sex while high on crystal can stay hard and fuck for hours. Others experience what is known as a “crystal dick” or the inability to get hard.

Often, men will use crystal in combination with Viagra or other similar medications to get or keep an erection. This can potentially raise your blood-pressure to dangerously high levels which can take you steps closer to an overdose or give you a long-lasting hard-on that can cause permanent damage.

Safer Sex Tips:

- Protect yourself.
- Stay mindful of your sexual limits. Identify ways to ensure you use a condom.
- Tops need condoms too. Topping without a condom still holds significant risk for HIV transmission.
- Reapply lube frequently to prevent the condom from drying out and to prevent the lining of your rectum from tearing, both of which increase the risk of HIV transmission.
- Condoms wear out. Change the condom when having sex for long sessions. Check to be sure the condom is still intact.

More Safer Sex Tips:

- Discuss your HIV status with your sex partners and ask them to share their status with you.
- When having oral sex for extended periods of time, check the condition of your mouth — you might not notice whether your mouth is chafed or sore. Drink water throughout the night.
- You can further reduce your risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections by using a condom when having oral sex.
- Check your partner's dick for sores or scratches.
- Having a sexually transmitted infection can increase the chance of HIV transmission.

Remember:

unprotected anal sex is the leading sexual risk behavior for HIV transmission.

- Use condoms.
- Have safer sex.
- Protect yourself.

For more information on safer sex, visit the GMHC website at www.gmhc.org.

How to Take Care of Yourself:

- If you are going to use, exercise extreme caution and limit how much you take.
- Crystal is highly addictive. Use may change from snorting to smoking or slamming—or from using socially to using alone.
- Bingeing postpones the end of the party but will make the crash worse.
- Don't assume you didn't get enough. The more you use, the more time it will take to feel anything, especially when snorting. If you don't feel it right away, wait.
- Tolerance develops quickly. You will need more and more crystal to get high.
- Don't overdo it. Overdose is a very real and present danger.
- Listen to what your body is telling you.
- Eat.
- Sleep. Crystal will impact your perceived need for sleep. Take naps. Allow your body to recover.
- Avoid dehydration. Drink water and cranberry juice, but avoid caffeine, soda, and energy drinks.
- Don't hesitate to get help. If you have questions, whether you are just thinking about using, occasionally using, or find yourself using more often, you can get answers. See resources below.

If you are HIV positive:

- Crystal causes HIV to reproduce more rapidly in your body.
- Crystal reduces the effectiveness of HIV meds (HAART).
- Some protease inhibitors, such as Amprenavir (Agenerase), increase the amount of amphetamine in your bloodstream two- to threefold, putting you at risk for an overdose.
- Crystal use can exhaust your immune system and affect your ability to take medications as prescribed.
- Crystal may affect your decision about condom use and safer sex. If you have sex without condoms, you are likely to transmit HIV to your partner(s).

If you are HIV negative:

- Research has connected crystal use to the rise of HIV infection rates among gay men.
- Crystal is known to reduce inhibitions, which may lead you to engage in sex you might not have otherwise, such as bottoming, rough sex, or unprotected sex.
- Crystal can cause some men to forget their decisions to use condoms and protect themselves.
- If you use crystal, its links to HIV infection make it important for you to reconsider your use.

If you are injecting (slamming) crystal:

- Use a new syringe and new equipment every time you inject.
- Don't share needles. Sharing needles can lead to HIV, Hepatitis B and C.
- Clean injection sites with alcohol pads before injecting. If alcohol pads are not available, clean the injection site with warm soap and water. It will not be as effective as alcohol.
- Change injection sites to avoid collapsed veins and abscesses.
- New needles can be purchased at participating pharmacies without a prescription. For more information, call **1-800-543-3638**.
- Access needle exchange programs. For information on exchange locations, contact the Harm Reduction Coalition (212) 213-6376 or www.harmreduction.org.

For a more extensive list of how to take care of your physical and mental health, you can also visit www.tweaker.org.

Resources

GMHC can help you reduce or stop using crystal. We can provide you with the tools and skills you need to practice safer sex.

Come to discuss any concerns about your crystal use and/or your sexual health concerns.

Drop-in counseling hours are 4pm to 7pm Monday through Friday. No appointment necessary.

Meet with an experienced peer counselor, someone who can relate to you personally and what you are experiencing.

Engage in short-term counseling to examine the impact crystal is having on your life, to assess your sexual decision-making, and to develop solutions that are comfortable for you.

Participate in 10-week groups to help you obtain tools that support change.

All our services are confidential and free of charge.

No insurance necessary.

Gay Men Health Crisis

GMHC Hotline
1-800-AIDS-NYC (1-800-243-7692)
hotline@gmhc.org
www.gmhc.org

Substance Use Counseling and Education (S.U.C.E.)

Information Line
(212) 367-1354

Other Resources in New York City

Pride Institute

Outpatient Addiction
Program

(212) 755-0200

www.pride-institute.com

St. Vincent's Hospital

Alcoholism and Addiction
Outpatient Program

(212) 604-8273

Inter-Care

Alcohol and Addiction
Outpatient Program

(212) 532-0303

www.inter-care.org

Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA)

www.nycma.org

Callen-Lorde Community Health Center

Primary Healthcare
(including mental health)

(212) 271-7272

www.callen-lorde.org

LGBT Community Center CenterCare


(212) 620-7310

www.gaycenter.org

Harm Reduction Coalition

(212) 213-6376

www.harmreduction.org



I did some
crystal
so I could
party all night...

next thing
I'm screwing without condoms.

Now I could have HIV.

Crystal: It's dangerous. Know the risks.

For more images of our crystal campaign, visit: www.gmhc.org



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