

**Crystal meth : gay men, sex and drugs / Terrence Higgins Trust.**

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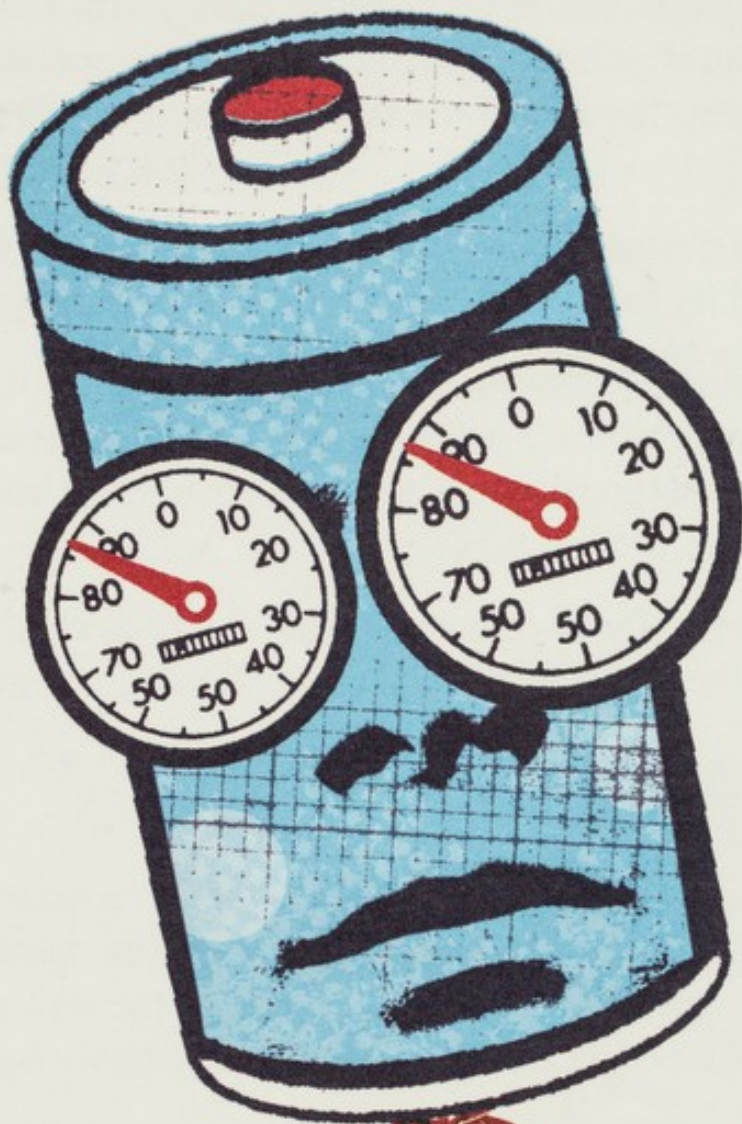
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Gay men, sex and drugs

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Crystal meth

## What's the score?

Crystal meth is also known as: meth, crystal, methamphetamine and Tina. In the US it's also called ice, crank and speed (not to be confused with the British use of speed for ordinary, weaker amphetamine).

Crystal's a super-strength amphetamine stimulant (it speeds up your body and its functions). Industrial chemicals and cleaning products (often toxic) go into making it.

Used in dance clubs or during sex, crystal releases the brain's stress hormone norepinephrine and 'feel good' chemicals dopamine and serotonin.

Meth comes as white or colourless crystals which can be crushed to make a powder. It might sometimes come as a pill.

## Taking crystal

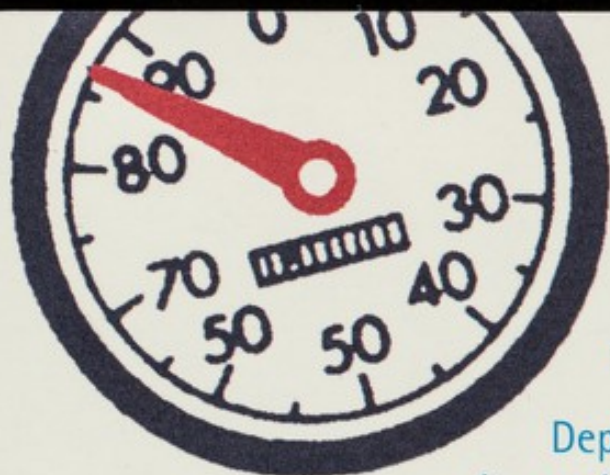
Meth in its crystal form can be smoked through a glass pipe. Crystal as a powder is usually snorted, but can be mixed with water and injected. It can also be injected up the arse with a syringe with the needle taken off (known as a booty bump).

Using meth is called tweaking; injecting it is called slamming.

## Highs and lows

Meth is used for energy during non-stop sex or dancing. It can make you feel on a high, wide awake, confident (sometimes invincible), impulsive, less likely to feel pain, and very horny (and with fewer inhibitions).

Crystal pushes up your body temperature, heartbeat and blood pressure, possibly to dangerous levels, with a risk of heart attack, stroke, coma or, if unlucky, death.



You might go days without eating or sleeping. The come-down can leave you feeling exhausted, aggressive, paranoid, in some cases even suicidal.

Depending on how you take crystal, it can damage the lungs, nose and mouth.

The drug's bad reputation comes from the many casualties it's caused on the gay scene in America and Australia.

## A long term relationship?

Tolerance to crystal meth soon builds, with more needed to get the same high. The drug has a reputation for being quickly addictive. Many who party with Tina have waved goodbye to jobs, homes, money, boyfriends, friends and health. Hardened gay scene party animals who can control their use of other drugs have found themselves out of their depth with crystal. It can get hard to think of having sex without being on meth.

Using crystal long term can get scary; we're talking psychosis or lasting mental health problems (even after quitting the drug).

Quitting crystal can be very hard, and its effects on the brain can last long after giving the drug up.

## Crystal with other drugs

**HIV drugs** – protease inhibitors could cause a big, maybe fatal rise in levels of crystal in the body. And if you're tweaking the weekend away you're less likely to take your HIV drugs on time (if you remember at all). Meth itself damages the immune system, as does going without food or sleep when you're on it.

**Ecstasy, cocaine, poppers and Viagra-type drugs** - all these put your heart under strain. If you're using crystal too, you're pushing your heart even harder.

**Anti-depressants** - taking crystal while on anti-depressants can make life-threatening reactions more likely, including dangerously high blood pressure. Check with your doctor or one of the places listed in this booklet.

## Useful to know

Injecting is best avoided. It's the quickest way to getting addicted and runs the risk of serious health problems (skin abscesses, collapsed veins, blood poisoning and heart infections). Sharing injecting equipment puts you at high risk of getting or passing on HIV, hepatitis C and other infections.

Using hot pipes might injure your mouth and if you share them it risks passing on - in tiny amounts of blood - infections like hepatitis C and HIV.

Condoms are more likely to break after about half an hour of fucking. So during long sex sessions on crystal it makes sense to check rubbers during sex and put a fresh one on after 30 minutes.

## The law

In 2007 crystal meth was reclassified as a class A drug.

Possession can mean up to seven years in prison and/or an unlimited fine.

Intending to supply (including giving it to mates) can mean up to life in prison and/or an unlimited fine.

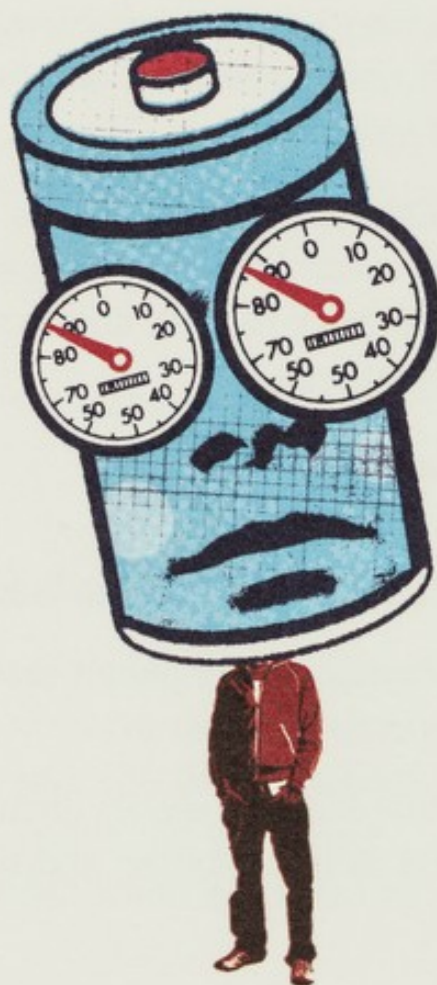
## Sex on crystal meth

Crystal can make a man feel very horny, even sexually compulsive, shagging with lots of men during sex binges. Some guys on crystal do sexual stuff they wouldn't normally do, including risking picking up or passing on HIV.

Crystal often stops men from coming or getting a hard-on (known as 'crystal dick').

Long or rough crystal-fuelled sex sessions can cause sore or bleeding arses, dicks and mouths. These might not be noticed but mean more risk of HIV, hepatitis C and other sexually transmitted infections being passed on.

Sex on crystal has been described as cold, aggressive or disconnected.



## more info

If you'd like to talk to someone with lots of experience of drug-related issues, there's:

**One-2-One counselling** with a drugs counsellor at Terrence Higgins Trust's London offices. It's free of charge and to see if this would be useful for you, call our **Wellbeing Service** on **0207 812 1777**.

Or you can ask one of the **LADS** outreach team (identifiable in venues and cruising areas by their LADS stand, t-shirts and ID badges) about speaking to our drugs worker.

Also, check out [www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk) / **DRUG FUCKEO**

### Antidote

A London service gay and bisexual men concerned about their alcohol or drug use can make use of, with weekly drop-in, one-to-one counselling, support groups and more. Call **020 7287 8743** or go to [www.thehungerford.org/antidote.asp](http://www.thehungerford.org/antidote.asp)

### Talk To Frank

Information and support around alcohol and drug use. Call the 24 hour helpline on **0800 77 66 00** or contact by email, details from their website. Also, check out the 'need help' section of the site, [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

### [www.crystalbreaks.org](http://www.crystalbreaks.org)

An American information site.

### [www.aidschicago.org/crystal/staying\\_off\\_crystal.pdf](http://www.aidschicago.org/crystal/staying_off_crystal.pdf)

Advice for men wanting to quit the drug.