

Clinical Tool: Working with Young People Using Crystal Methamphetamine

The following information has been summarized from yodaa.org.au. This website contains an interactive tool that can be used with clients to describe the impacts of ice on the brain. The site also contains other useful videos.

1. Consider extended periods of care

Engaging a young person over extended periods supports the development of therapeutic relationships. Young people with substance use disorder require more time to develop trust in the treating clinician, and this will result in improved treatment outcomes and engagement with treatment in the long term. Reducing stigma associated with treatment and allowing the young person to be an active contributor to the treatment goals and plans promotes this therapeutic relationship.

Supporting a young person to maintain changes should be part of every care plan.

2. Be creative

Varying motivation and capacity to plan ahead makes it more difficult to attend appointments. Relying on setting boundaries on missed appointments alone will likely further disengage young people using ice/meth.

Consider strategies that promote engagement then back these with assertive follow up. Modalities such as outreach are particularly effective in engaging young people with motivation difficulties.

Promote ideas to assist treatment such as:

- Going for a walk
- Using music and visuals
- Mindfulness
- Social media
- Youtube
- Self-affirmations
- Gratitude

Encouraging the involvement of an AOD worker to support attendance at appointments may also assist so it is important to engage young people around their interest on this kind of support.

3. Break It Up

There is potential that some young people may have difficulty with some cognitive processes, flexible thinking, attention and retaining information. The clinician should consider seeing the young person several times in one week for very brief periods rather than a long session every fortnight. When providing information, think about focusing on one or two ideas at a time and repeat those ideas to enhance understanding.

4. Eat, sleep, reassure

Young people who have been using meth for extended periods of time may experience an overall deterioration in physical and mental health. As with any drug, reassuring a young person that their health can improve is key. Referral to a dietician, practice nurse or charitable aid agencies that provide meals may be of benefit.

Many youth AOD services have day programs where young people can present for a range of activities and supports. This often includes healthy meals, clothes washing and safe places to recover from acute intoxication. They often have access to nursing or medical staff as well as AOD outreach workers for ongoing support.

Evidence-based treatments for ice use

There are a range of evidence based treatments for reduction in ice use. These include:

- CBT and motivational interviewing
- Harm reduction strategies
- Increased protective behaviours
- Coping skills training
- Problem solving
- Goal setting
- Emotion regulation
- Relapse prevention

Resources for these topics can be found elsewhere on the [headspace Clinical Toolkit](#)