



Mindframe: Quick reference guide for public communication about crystal methamphetamine

This guide has been developed to support safe and sensitive public portrayal of crystal methamphetamine. The way we communicate about crystal methamphetamine can have a profound impact on individuals who use the drug, their families, and the wider community.

Crystal methamphetamine, commonly known as “ice”, continues to be a significant concern in society.

However, it is crucial to approach public discussions and portrayals of this issue responsibly, avoiding messaging that is

inaccurate and/or can perpetuate harmful stereotypes.

By adopting the advice in this guide, we can contribute to more informed and compassionate public communication surrounding crystal methamphetamine, reducing barriers to help seeking and ultimately contributing to the reduction of harms associated with methamphetamine use.

For more detail and context, access the *Mindframe* for Alcohol and Other Drugs guidelines, and other resources [here](#).



Always consider the impact of language and images on the people that you are communicating about, as well as the impact it may have on audiences.

Key guidance

- Communicate about crystal methamphetamine use as a public health issue, like any other health condition, and highlight the availability of effective treatment options, aiming to improve understanding and reduce stigma among the general public.
- When presenting crystal methamphetamine use current statistics, provide context by comparing them to other drugs like cannabis, MDMA, cocaine, alcohol, and tobacco; emphasising the harm caused by other drugs should not be overlooked just because crystal methamphetamine may be more topical or widely discussed.
- Challenge stereotypes and misconceptions by refraining from portraying people who use crystal methamphetamine as delinquent or violent, recognising that most individuals using the drug do not exhibit violent behaviour.
- Be sensitive to the impact of media portrayals; the stigma surrounding crystal methamphetamine use can lead to shame and isolation among individuals and their families, making them less likely to seek support.
- Ensure that your message fosters understanding and empathy, encouraging help-seeking behaviours. Provide details of relevant support services including the National Alcohol and Other Drugs Hotline (1800 250 015). Further information on how to encourage help-seeking is available [here](#).
- Encourage help-seeking and help-offering by providing the details of at least two 24/7 appropriate sources of support.
- Language and image choice is a key part of ensuring your communication is safe, sensitive and reduces stigma. Further guidance on word and image choice is provided in the following tables.

Language guidance

Choosing language that reflects and empowers individual experiences, is not sensationalised, is understandable and is adapted to individual preferences or audience is recommended.

| Preferred | Problematic |
|--|---|
| ✔ Crystal methamphetamine use | ✘ Ice abuse, ice misuse, problem ice use |
| ✔ Person who uses crystal methamphetamine | ✘ Ice user, ice abuser |
| ✔ Person with a dependence on crystal methamphetamine | ✘ Ice user, ice addict, meth-head |
| ✔ Person who has stopped using crystal methamphetamine | ✘ Clean, sober, drug-free |
| ✔ Person with lived experience of crystal methamphetamine dependence | ✘ Ex-ice addict, former ice addict, used to be addicted |
| ✔ Currently using crystal methamphetamine | ✘ Using again, fallen off the wagon, had a setback |

Image guidance

Using diverse images, seeking permission before using images of a person with lived experience, and using images that are hopeful and encourage help-seeking is recommended.

| Preferred | Problematic |
|--|---|
| ✔ Images that show a range of people living their lives in usual settings | ✘ Image use that only reflects stereotypical or extreme experiences of AOD use (e.g. homelessness) can contribute to stigma and marginalisation |
| ✔ Images that relate to health and wellbeing, and hope of recovery (e.g. people accessing AOD support) | ✘ Images that convey a lack of hope or recovery can contribute to stigma and be a barrier to help seeking |
| ✔ Use images that are relevant to the story and promote harm reduction | ✘ Using images of needles and syringes when talking about other drugs such as cannabis |
| ✔ Images that show a diverse range of people, cultures, and ethnicities in various everyday settings | ✘ Images of stereotypical or extreme experiences of crystal methamphetamine use such as violent behaviour or hallucinations, can contribute to stigma and marginalisation |
| ✔ Images that relate to health and wellbeing such as people (e.g people seeking or receiving support) | ✘ Images that are inaccurate or exaggerated that may create panic or fear such as 'meth mouth' or 'zombies' |
| ✔ Images that are relevant to the story and promote empathy and understanding | ✘ Images that misrepresent the typical effects of crystal methamphetamine use such as 'before and after' photos |
| ✔ Images that convey crystal methamphetamine use as a public health issue | ✘ Images that convey crystal methamphetamine use as shameful or a moral failing, such as police operations |