



“



# METH HELP

How to stay in control

Q

“



”



DRUG  
HELP  
.ORG.NZ



DON'T  
LET  
METH  
DO  
YOU.

“

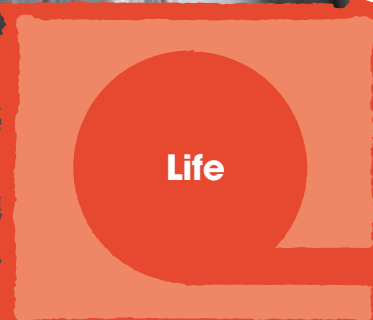
At first it was an occasional thing, then Friday nights, then all weekend. Then I used it to get stuff done. A couple of months later, I had it when I woke up. But I wasn't addicted because I went without it three days a week. Sometime after that, at 4am, I was installing a custom designed rotating toothbrush holder made of coat hangers, brass fittings, an RC motor, and 2 AA batteries. That was when I realised I lost control many months ago.

”

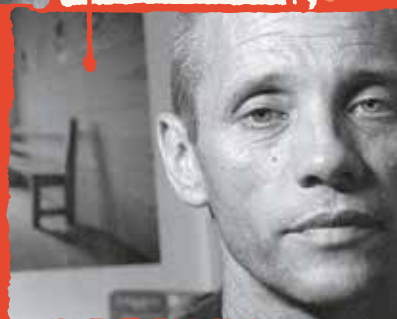
**Anonymous online  
community member**



# METHUEN



# HELP



**Attitude**

Watch these  
New Zealanders talk  
about their meth use at  
[drughelp.org.nz/meth](http://drughelp.org.nz/meth).

# ALL THIS TALK ABOUT METH

# WHAT'S INSIDE



## **KEEPING WELL** 8

- 10 WAYS
- TALK ABOUT IT
- H.A.L.T.S.

## **BALANCING CHOICES** 12

- WHERE DID IT START?
- WHAT ABOUT NOW?
- WHERE TO NEXT?


## **SO YOU'RE READY TO CHANGE** 16

- 10 TIPS TO GET THROUGH
- FIND SOMETHING NEW

## **GET MORE HELP** 20

## **WORRIED ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE?** 22

- 10 HELPFUL HINTS



**Methamphetamine** (also called meth, ice, crystal, crack, P, tina) is a strong and addictive stimulant. After taking meth, people often feel more sexual, confident, and energetic. This is usually followed by a hard comedown. In New Zealand, meth is illegal to use or sell but is available on the black market, usually in crystal form. It can be taken many ways including swallowed, snorted or injected, but most often is smoked in a glass pipe.

For updated information about how much meth to take with less unpleasant effects and what drugs to avoid taking at the same time, visit [drugs.tripsit.me/methamphetamine](https://drugs.tripsit.me/methamphetamine).





People who use meth are often demonised. We rarely talk about the reality of meth, why people use it, the short and long term impact on the person and their whānau, and how to cut back or stop using meth before it causes major problems.

About one in one hundred New Zealanders used meth in the past 12 months. They're a varied group – professionals, trades people, athletes, executives, teachers, university students, mums, or even doctors.

7

Using meth does not make you less of a person.

YOU'RE  
HUMAN



## KEEPING WELL: 10 WAYS

Meth is a risk to your physical and mental health, so no use is best. But if you use meth, here are the best ways to keep well.

- 1.** Mixing meth with other drugs or medicines can be unpredictable. Especially avoid strong hallucinogens, Tramadol and MAOI antidepressants.
- 2.** Use condoms to protect yourself from STIs and HIV. Meth often makes people very sexual and bigger risk takers at the same time.
- 3.** Eat something every 4 or 5 hours, drink more water, and brush your teeth after food or sweet drinks.
- 4.** Have a break if you've been going longer than 24 hours. Don't use after 3pm if you hope to sleep later.
- 5.** Consider taking meth orally like in a drink. It can produce a smoother high, prevents injury caused by smoking or injecting, and makes you less likely to use more.
- 6.** Use a shatterproof pipe if smoking as regular glass becomes brittle. Take care to avoid burns and clean the inside regularly to remove burnt residue which could be inhaled.



- 7.** Injecting meth is risky. It's easy to use too much, and it increases the risk of Hep C or HIV. If injecting, use sterile equipment and don't share it. There are needle exchanges in New Zealand (see page 20).
- 8.** Meth is illegal. It's also illegal to own a pipe. Be discreet and only keep less than 5 grams for personal use. Anything over this is considered intent to supply and involves harsher penalties.
- 9.** Don't use when pregnant. Like alcohol, meth can disrupt normal development of the fetus.
- 10.** Leave a month or two between use. Your brain needs time to recover so it doesn't see meth as the easiest route to pleasure.



## TALK ABOUT IT

Talking is a great way to gain perspective on how meth is affecting you. Talking to someone who also uses meth could help, but they may not challenge you if that's what you need. On the other hand, chatting with one or two friends or whānau members you trust, who don't use, could help you keep a clear view of the situation.

### People to count on.

**Make a list of four or five people you can rely on. A mix of people you can chat with face to face, online, or on your phone might work.**

“

Then after the third day I started hallucinating. I thought - this is cool but it's not even hallucinating, it's just fucking with your head and making you see shit that isn't there and think things that aren't real.

”



**Bob**  WATCH ONLINE



## HALTS

Meth reduces your brain's ability to recognise what you need. For example, good feelings might become unpleasant feelings like paranoia or irritability because you haven't slept or eaten recently. Or as soon as your comedown is over, your brain could tell you it wants more - even when you know that's a bad idea.

An easy tool to keep well is HALTS. Take a moment to ask yourself five questions...

<b>Hungry</b>	Have I had enough to eat today?
<b>Angry</b>	Am I feeling angry at something?
<b>Lonely</b>	Am I feeling lonely and need company?
<b>Tired</b>	Do I need to go to bed or have a nap?
<b>Stressed</b>	Am I feeling stressed about something?

### A word of caution

It's tempting to fix unpleasant feelings by taking a bit more. However, this can mean worse feelings and a harder crash later which makes you want more still. HALTS helps you stop this loop.

## BALANCING CHOICES: WHERE DID IT START?

Many people try a range of drugs at various times in their lives, and then stop. For others, their drug use becomes a bigger part of their lives as they use more, more often.

Some people don't realise it at the time, but using drugs like meth can feel particularly good when their everyday life is a bit shit. This might include stuff like depression, anxiety, trauma, abuse, discrimination, or feelings of inadequacy to name a few. Meth will not fix these feelings, and over time can make them worse.

### Go back to the beginning.

**Think about how your relationship with meth started and what it gave you. You could make a list, talk to someone, or write a story about it.**

What did I enjoy doing before I started taking meth?

What do I really like about meth?

What do I do when I'm using meth?

“

He offered me some and I was curious. I'll try something once, and I tried it. Unfortunately, I liked it.

”





## WHAT ABOUT NOW?

Most people don't become addicted, but if you're using meth every week or every day, or your use is increasing, there's a chance that you're hooked without realising it.

An early sign of addiction are urges to use. The sooner you notice there is something unusual about these urges, the easier it will be to change.

With time, meth urges can win over urges to do the things you value and love. This happens because meth makes your brain release masses of the feel-good chemical, dopamine – a lot more than from doing natural things you usually enjoy.

### Sliding Relationships

Relationships are particularly affected if meth and the things you do on meth become more of a priority in life. It's hard to stay in a relationship with someone who is using meth a lot. They might find you emotionally distant, unpredictable, or see you as out of control.

#### How life has changed.

**Think about the following questions, and tell someone supportive, make a list, or write a story.**

Have I lost anything from my life?

How do others say I behave on meth?

What do I really dislike about using meth?



## WHERE NEXT?

For some, the longer they use, the more that the things they said they would never do start to happen. For you, this could be things like hanging out with people you normally wouldn't, having a lot of riskier sex, having sex with someone who's offering drugs, or selling your stuff for money to buy drugs.

If you're doing something risky or something you're ashamed about while on meth, now could be a good time to make a change. Remember, drug and alcohol treatment services won't turn you away or dob you in to the police.

14

### **Make a decision.**

**Look at your journey with meth so far. Compare what you like with what you dislike. What do you want to do?**

Stop

Cut down

Use/maintain





## About cutting down

If you plan to cut down, it can be easier to first stop completely and re-establish what normal feels like. How long that takes depends on many factors unique to you, but two months could be a good place to start. After that, think about the effect meth had on your life before you decide to use again. If you do use again, decide how often and how much you can use without it causing problems.

## About maintaining

If meth isn't obviously causing problems at the moment, it can still be a risky strategy. Exactly how risky, depends on the level you hope to maintain. Meth affects everyone differently, but if you're using more than once a month, you may not be giving your brain enough time to return to normal.

Creating and sticking to rules can help override urges and limit use. Examples:

- Only use with someone else (i.e. not alone).
- Only use on long weekends.
- Stopping if you haven't slept for 24 hours.

**What are your rules?** Write some down to protect the life you enjoy, commit to them, and reflect on them regularly.

# SO YOU'RE READY TO C

When you decide to make a change, not knowing what lies ahead can be scary. Your experience will be influenced by how much, how often, and how long you've used. Your mental and physical health and attitude will also play a role.

No one is saying it'll be easy, but if you expect stopping to be hard, it will be. It may be off-putting to face a comedown and the feelings that follow (withdrawal). But it can be helpful to remember that the physical effects of stopping meth are mild and short lived compared to some other drugs.

## Make an action plan

Writing a plan can help you prepare practically and mentally for stopping. Your action plan should include stuff like where you'll be, what you'll do, who will be your support people, and what you'll eat - a detailed daily routine or timetable can also help.

“

I just wanted to clean myself up and just be a better person.

Dale  WATCH ONLINE

”



# HANGE

Since last use	Symptoms
<b>1-3</b> <b>DAYS</b>	<b>Comedown:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhausted</li> <li>• Hungry</li> <li>• Tired</li> <li>• Depressed</li> </ul>
<b>2-10</b> <b>DAYS</b> Common <div>  </div> Uncommon	<b>Withdrawal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong urges</li> <li>• Anxious or emotionally flat</li> <li>• Easily irritated</li> <li>• Tired</li> <li>• Reduced brain power</li> <li>• Disturbing dreams</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> <li>• Aches, headaches, diarrhoea</li> <li>• Paranoia</li> <li>• Hallucinations</li> </ul>
<b>7-28</b> <b>DAYS</b>	<b>Settling down:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weaker urges</li> <li>• Moody</li> <li>• Depressed</li> <li>• Sleep problems</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> <li>• Reduced brain power</li> </ul>
<b>1-3</b> <b>MONTHS</b> (sometimes longer)	<b>Establishing normal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling healthier</li> <li>• Sleeping better</li> </ul>



## SO YOU'RE READY TO CHANGE: 10 TIPS TO GET THROUGH

After you stop, it's not unusual to want to use when things get tough, but the answer can be as simple as taking a deep breath and remembering HALTS (see page 11). But here's ten more tips for getting through withdrawal.

1. If you do use, think of it as a one off and learn from it.
2. Stay away from the people and places where you used.
3. Do things with people who don't use.
4. Don't have meth in the house.
5. Use a natural sleep aid like valerian or magnesium.  
Cannabis, alcohol and benzos can lead to other problems.
6. Don't fight urges. Tell yourself you'll decide in 5 minutes (the feeling will usually pass).
7. Watch movies, tv-series' or play video games
8. Be active. Go for walks.
9. Stretch, do some deep breathing, get a massage or do yoga to relax and reduce stress.
10. Find something new...



## FIND SOMETHING NEW

Cutting back or stopping can be far easier if, rather than focussing on making a change to your meth use, you change-up your life instead. Starting something new could involve learning a new language, getting a new job, joining a volunteer group, cultural group, sports team, dance group, or even going back to church. Another powerful way to take your mind off meth could be to move to a new house, or move in with whānau, where you'll be around people who don't use.

START  
SOMETHING  
NEW



## GET MORE HELP

### **Alcohol Drug Helpline 0800 787 797**

Even if you just want to talk about your next step, they're trained to listen, ask helpful questions, and encourage you to find options including how to get more help if you want.

### **Online support**

Exchanging stories online can help you realise you are not alone. Just remember that the info people share may not always be correct. There are popular groups on Reddit and Facebook such as New Zealand 'P' Pull on Facebook.

### **Community support**

There is probably a community alcohol and drug service near you. They can get you into a treatment programme or let you know about local support groups, like Narcotics Anonymous.

### **Needle exchanges**

If you plan to inject, there is a network of locations around New Zealand that provide needles, syringes, filters, swabs and other accessories. Visit [nznep.org.nz](http://nznep.org.nz) for one near you.

### **More info and resources**

Visit [drughelp.org.nz/meth](http://drughelp.org.nz/meth) for other resources including:

- P\*\*d off, a guide for stopping. Produced by Matua Rāki.
- Home detox. Produced by Odyssey House.



**0800 METH HELP**  
**0800 6384 4357**

The Meth Help Team is a free, confidential phone counselling service for anyone in New Zealand wanting to talk about a meth-related question, issue or problem.

The Meth Help Team provides:

- Advice on how to be safer when using meth
- Self-help material designed for people who use meth
- A follow-up service where calls are arranged in advance at a time that suits
- Brief but involved help with cutting down or stopping
- Assistance with finding and getting treatment
- Support to people waiting for face-to-face counselling
- Support for whānau and friends of someone using meth

21

Run by Odyssey House in Christchurch, the Meth Help Team is staffed by trained counsellors with a range of experiences including lived experience of meth and other drugs. They're available Monday to Friday with flexible evening availability on these days. If your call is not answered, leave a message and you'll be called back within one working day.

**To talk to someone now, call the Alcohol Drug Helpline. They're 24/7 and can also arrange for the Meth Help Team to contact you later.**



## WORRIED ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE?

Meth is a powerful stimulant and frequent use (weekly or daily over a period of many months) can be a sign of addiction.

It can be scary watching someone become consumed with using meth, the changes in behaviour, the lies they may tell, and the anxiety and fear of what may happen next.

You might see them going a million kilometres an hour when they're using, and then being irritable, unmotivated and sleeping for days on end when they crash.

You're not alone. Many whānau have felt the destruction meth can have in their lives. They have also experienced the isolation, feelings of powerlessness and the shame that can go with having to explain someone else's strange behaviour.

**If you're concerned about your, or someone else's, immediate safety, call the police (111).**





## Take care of yourself

You don't need to deal with someone else's meth use alone. Seeking support will give you tools to help yourself and your loved one.

## Give help on your terms

It isn't all or nothing. Set clear boundaries about how you can help and when. For example, it's ok to be available in the evening but not during the day. It is your unconditional love that is the key to helping others change.

## More help

For videos, more information, or to order resources, visit [drughelp.org.nz/meth](http://drughelp.org.nz/meth).

“

I just wanted marriage and kids and to be happy without all the drama, and I think that's why I cried myself to sleep and stuff. I wanted it to be over, but I didn't know how it could be over.

Kirsty  WATCH ONLINE

”





# HELPFUL HINTS

---

IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS A  
PROBLEM WITH METH

---

- 1.** Accept the person has a problem that needs your attention.
- 2.** Without shaming or embarrassing them, let the person know what concerns you.
- 3.** Try to only have conversations when they're sober and not high or coming down.
- 4.** Listen and empathise with what they're going through, and ask questions which can help them see things differently.
- 5.** Don't accept rude or aggressive behaviour as normal or understandable. It's never OK for you to be mistreated by anyone.
- 6.** It's natural to be disappointed or hurt if they have broken a promise.
- 7.** When the person opens up, help them develop a plan and commit to a course of action.
- 8.** Don't judge or criticise the person because they can't control their meth use. Addiction can happen to anyone.
- 9.** Remember that you're not the cause of the problem.
- 10.** Make sure you have at least one person who you can talk to about your feelings and worries.

## **ABOUT THIS BOOKLET**

This booklet is most helpful for people who have recently started using meth, or who use meth casually. The content aims to reduce harm, encourage mindfulness about the habit-forming potential of meth, and offers a range of suggestions to help people reduce or stop using meth.

## **THANKS**

To the courageous people who honestly and openly shared their experiences in the online videos, this would not have been possible without your input. Thank you.

### **ISBN for July 2018 update:**

978-0-473-44854-7 (Soft cover)

978-0-473-44855-4 (PDF)

# DRUGHELP.ORG.NZ/METH

---

Alcohol Drug Helpline  
MethHelp Team

0800 787 797  
0800 METH HELP  
6384 4357

---

DRUG  
HELP  
.ORG.NZ

AT THE HEART  
OF THE MATTER,  
NZ DRUG  
FOUNDATION.

Te Tūāpapa Tarukino o Aotearoa

 MINISTRY OF  
HEALTH

MANATŪ HAUORA

New Zealand Government