



# CRYSTAL

## What You Should Know

For some men, crystal meth is an integral part of gay culture and their personal, social and sexual identities. Unfortunately, it also plays an undeniable role in the rise of HIV, STDs, and addiction in our community. There are many decisions to make about crystal: How can I minimize its risks? How do I stop? Should I even try it?

- ◆ If you don't use, don't start.
- ◆ If you do use, seek help to manage, cut down or quit.
- ◆ If stopping isn't an option, act consistently to reduce sexual risk and safeguard your health.

Crystal is not a casual drug. Our response to crystal shouldn't be casual either.

Public Health, our community HIV prevention partners, and *Seattle Gay News* want you to know the facts about crystal so you can make more informed choices about it.

### If you're curious about using \_\_\_\_\_

- **DON'T START.** Crystal meth is highly addictive. Dependency can develop quickly, even if you think you can control your use.
- Despite popular perception, most gay/bi men DO NOT use crystal.
- You can have a great, satisfying sex life *without* crystal. Most gay men do.
- Using crystal regularly can cause tooth loss, undesirable weight loss, paranoia, brain damage, and impotence. It impairs sexual choices and **greatly increases your risk of getting or giving HIV.**

### If you use \_\_\_\_\_

- Seek help to manage, cut down or quit.
- Get tested for HIV and STDs every three months.
- **BEFORE you get high:**
  - Plan for sexual safety. Decide how and with whom you want to have sex. Make a commitment to disclose and ask about HIV/STD status before you have sex. Commit to using condoms once you're high.
  - For bottoms, insert a Reality (female) condom before getting high or leaving your house for sex.
  - Pack plenty of condoms and lube. Put them where you will see them once you're high.
- **WHILE you are high:**
  - Eat, drink extra water, and sleep.
  - You CAN play safely and use condoms — even while you're high. Most men do.
  - Prolonged crystal sex leads to excessive friction and can cause condoms to dry out more quickly or break. Change condoms every hour and with each sex partner.
  - Use more water-based lubricant than usual. Too much lube is almost enough.
  - Using crystal together with other drugs such as Viagra/Levitra/Cialis, poppers and Ecstasy can cause serious and even life-threatening health problems.

- **Keistering** ("booty bumping") is NOT a safer way to do crystal. It can seriously damage your bowels or anus. This makes anal sex very painful and increases your chance of getting HIV.
- If you're not injecting, **DON'T START.** Reject offers from sex partners to inject you or show you how. Injecting **greatly** increases your chances of HIV, STDs, hepatitis C, abscesses, other soft tissue infections and social/sexual rejection.
- If you're using crystal, take these precautions consistently. Otherwise, your chances of staying HIV negative are slim...especially if you inject.

### If you inject \_\_\_\_\_

- Nearly **one-half** of all gay/bi men who inject crystal are HIV+. This is more than any other group in our community.
- Seek help to manage, cut down or quit.
- Use a new, sterile syringe every time you inject or divide drugs. You can get sterile syringes at the needle exchange or at many pharmacies without a prescription.
- Do not share syringes, mix caps or other paraphernalia with other users or sex partners.
- If sterile needles aren't available, proper use of bleach can kill HIV (with the 3-step method). Bleach is not likely to kill hepatitis B or C.

### If you use crystal and have HIV \_\_\_\_\_

- Research shows that using crystal meth often leads to higher viral loads, faster HIV progression, worsened immune function, and increased neurological damage.
- Using crystal **DOES NOT** increase T-cells or boost your immune system. These are **myths**.
- The sooner you stop using crystal, the better you can manage your HIV successfully. If you can cut down or quit altogether, do so.
- Crystal can have bad interactions with many HIV meds.
- While you're high, you may forget to take your meds or forget to follow prescribed food and water guidelines. This can make your meds less effective and increase your viral load. Kidney stones are also common.
- Be honest with your doctor about your drug use. If you can't, get a new doctor. Talk about whether taking HIV medications while you're still using crystal is right for you.

We affirm the strengths and positive assets of gay men.

We encourage honest, open discussion about drug use and candid examination of the stigma and shame that isolate crystal users within our community.

Crystal use is complex. We have resources to help.

#### Project NEON

206-323-1768 [www.crystalneon.org](http://www.crystalneon.org)  
Seattle's only health education, counseling and HIV prevention program for gay/bi crystal users. Health information, outreach, referrals, free 1-1 and group counseling. Drop-ins welcome.

#### Seattle Counseling Service

206-323-1768 [www.seattlecounseling.org](http://www.seattlecounseling.org)  
LGBT chemical dependency treatment and mental health services.

#### Capitol Hill Alano Club

206-860-9560 [www.capitolhillalanoclub.org](http://www.capitolhillalanoclub.org)  
LGBT 12-Step meetings every day at 1222 E. Pine Street

#### Narcotics Anonymous

206-329-1618 [www.seattlena.org](http://www.seattlena.org)

#### Needle Exchange

Every day 6-8:30 pm  
On Capitol Hill, at 10th and Seneca (next to Lifelong AIDS Alliance).  
206-205-7837 for other locations and times.

#### HIV/STD Hotline

206-205-STDS (206-205-7837)  
Referrals for HIV and STD treatment and testing.

