

The link between Crystal Meth and HIV

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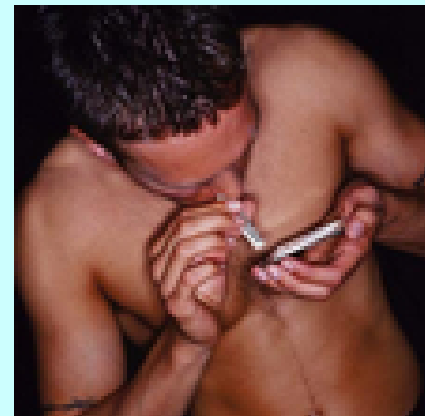
Introduction:

A common myth among gay men who have lived through the prevention messages of HIV is that crystal also comes in non-injecting forms. One of the main modes of HIV transmission is through needle sharing but if the drug is non-injecting then it is not in and of itself a risk for HIV. However, what results after the intake of crystal are spiraled sexual activities and unsafe decisions.

Also of no surprise to the world of public health is the notion that drug use and unsafe sex have always been synonymous with the transmission of HIV. In the 70's there was LSD, in the 80s there was cocaine and poppers and the 90s saw a huge trend in crystal meth use and rising rates of HIV infection among men who have sex with men and also identify themselves as "gay" or "bisexual".

Due to the heavy use of crystal methamphetamine and the decisions made during its influence from fatalism, unsafe sex and multiple partners; the MSM community is once again the population becoming affected by HIV at a large and rapid rate.

According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, "men high on crystal are four times more likely to engage in unprotected sex as those who aren't...The powerful stimulant leaves many users feeling euphoric and hypersexual, resulting in binges with multiple partners...because crystal causes temporary impotence...users are more likely to be the receptive partners in unsafe sex, where the risk of contracting HIV is greatest."



Since crystal meth use has proven to lead to unsafe sex, other STDs besides HIV (Syphilis) have also been on the rise among men who have sex with men.

Crystal Meth abuse and its risk among HIV Negative Men:

“Crystal often leads to unsafe sexual behaviors by increasing confidence, sex drive and sense of invulnerability while simultaneously reducing inhibitions and impairing judgment.”
(Washington Blade)

Several studies of circuit-going gay party goers in San Francisco; crystal was used by 40% of participants – found rates of unprotected anal sex up to 54%.

Crystal users twice as likely as non-users to engage in unprotected receptive anal sex. (CDC study)

2 of every 3 patients who recently test positive for HIV cite crystal as a factor in their infection. (Callen-Lorde Community Health Center)

Crystal Meth abuse and its risk among HIV Positive Men:

If you are HIV positive, crystal cuts your life short.

Researchers studying gay men with HIV on antiretroviral therapy have found that crystal users show significantly higher viral loads than non-users.



Crystal meth can actually stimulate HIV production and decrease T-cell counts.

“8 out of 10 of my clients are crystal addicts; of those, two-thirds gave HIV...” (Kathleen Watt, ED LA Van Ness recovery House.)

Risk of unprotected sex leads to transmission of HIV to others and infection of STD's to self, weakening the immune system further with other foreign communicable diseases.

Looking for more information? Contact the Crystal Meth Outreach Coordinator at (202) 671-5074.