

Staying Off Crystal

For a Day or Longer

*Practical Tips from
Gay and Bisexual Men*

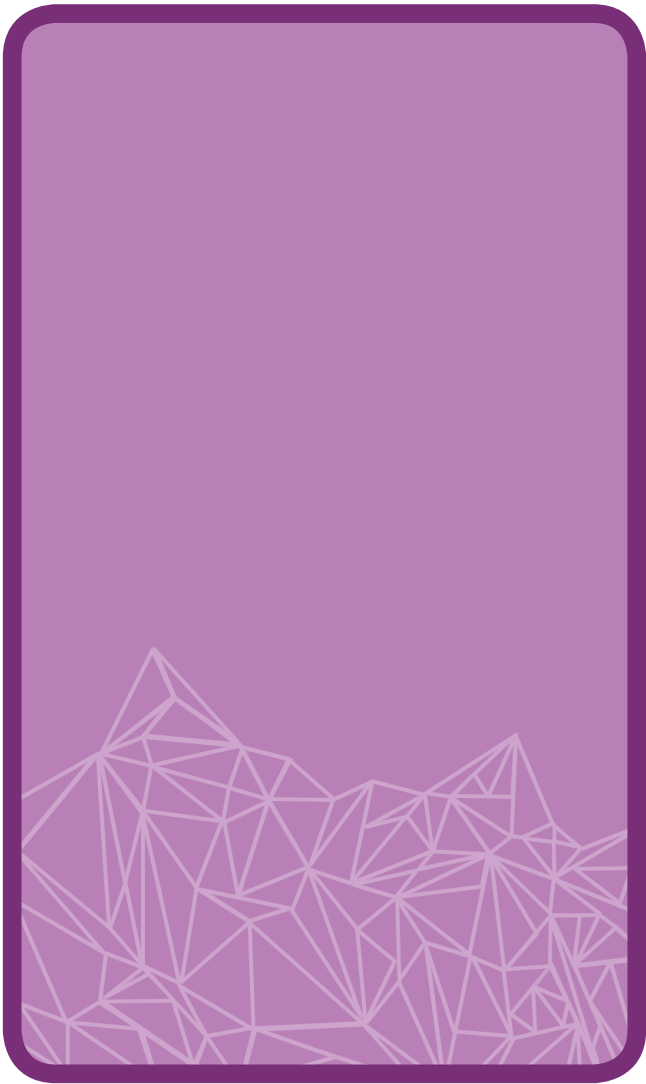


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Introduction

This booklet is a practical guide for gay/bi/queer and trans men who have sex with men, wanting to make positive changes with use of crystal meth.

This resource provides strategies and resources for guys that are looking to change or reduce the impacts of their crystal meth use, and also help those who looking to stop using all together.

It is a compilation of work informed by gay/bi/queer men from Toronto and Seattle who have had success in staying off crystal. It has been adapted for other regions, including Chicago.

Other communities affected by crystal meth, such as women and young people, have used this booklet because many of the concepts and strategies are universal. We encourage you take what you need from it.

This booklet has been found to be useful among folks in staying off other stimulant drugs, such as speed and crack-cocaine as they share similarities with meth.

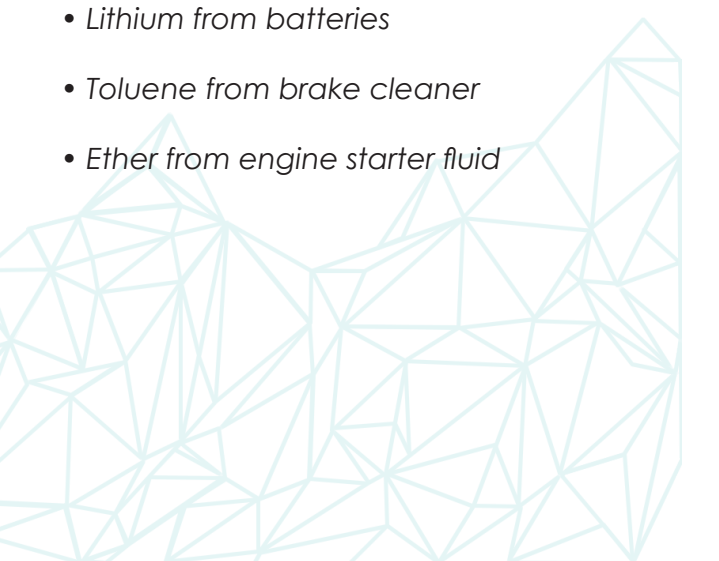


WHAT IS CRYSTAL?

It's a common name for crystal methamphetamine amongst gay/bi/queer men. Common names for crystal are "Tina", crystal meth and meth. Other common names include ice, glass and crank. Crystal belongs to a family of drugs called amphetamines - powerful stimulants that speed up the body's central nervous system.

WHAT IS CRYSTAL MADE OF?

The main ingredient in Tina is ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, which is found in many cold and flu medications. Other chemicals are added and are often extracted from common household items and industrial cleaning products, including:

- *Rubbing Alcohol*
 - *Lye*
 - *Lithium from batteries*
 - *Toluene from brake cleaner*
 - *Ether from engine starter fluid*
- 

CRYSTAL METH AND CANADIAN LAW

Crystal methamphetamine is classified under Schedule I of the Controlled Drug and Substances Act. As such, the maximum penalty for possession is 7 years, and the maximum penalty for trafficking, producing, importing/exporting, or possession for the purpose of export could be lifetime imprisonment.

Drug testing can find crystal meth in:

- *Urine, 3-6 days after use*
- *Hair, 90 days after use*
- *Blood, 24-72 hours after use*

Urine Drug Screening (UDS) is the primary drug test that is used for legal purposes.



OVERDOSE

If you are dealing with a meth-related overdose, it is vital you get medical support by calling 911. Tell the dispatch that you have an unconscious person who is having a heart attack or stroke.

When paramedics arrive, tell them you think it is a drug overdose, and that you think they may have taken crystal meth.

Medical staff will only tell police that drugs are involved if they think a more serious crime has taken place.

For example, if many people overdose at the same party, there might be cause for an investigation, as it suggests a contaminated batch of drugs may have entered the country. The hospital has no obligation to tell the police about your drug taking.



MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CRYSTAL METH AND SEX

It is commonly believed that meth frees deeply buried, repressed sexual desires and fantasies, that it is a sort of sexual liberator.

This idea is common among gay/bi/queer men who sometimes use meth to help overcome fear and anxiety around sexual attraction to other men.

The most recent psychological studies report, however, that this is a misinterpretation of how crystal meth works on the brain and what it is actually doing that affects your sex life.

Crystal meth shuts down the parts of the brain that regulate survival and self-preservation. At the same time, it increases your sex drive. It is not that meth opens you up to the kind of sex you normally would be too ashamed or afraid to have.

It does make you hornier, and more confident, but at the same time less able to perceive, assess and avoid potential risks.



CONSIDERING STAYING OFF CRYSTAL?

Considering staying off crystal can be a challenge, and deciding to quit crystal is a huge step – congratulations!

If the next steps feel really hard or scary, that is normal. Getting off crystal and staying off crystal is easier if broken down into lots of little steps ... Keep reading!

This booklet contains thoughts and advice from many gay /bi/queer men who have walked this same path before and those who are still walking it. We don't claim to be role models for change.

We've made some mistakes, and we don't have all the answers. But we do want to offer hope and the belief that you can make it!

The most important thing to remember is that you are not alone. There's a whole community of men who understand what you're going through. Help and support are out there! We hope you find both in this booklet.



RECOVERY FEARS ...

- 1. I'll be boring and bored.*
- 2. I'll lose my friends if I tell them about my use.*
- 3. I'll gain weight.*
- 4. I'll never have sex again.*
- 5. I don't think I can make it.*



... REALITY CHECK!

1. *I'll be real with others and clear-headed.*
2. *If I haven't lost them yet, my friends already know.*
3. *I didn't look that pretty strung out.*
4. *I'll never have cold, degrading sex again.*
5. *Neither did those of us in recovery now.*



Stages of Quitting

When you cut back on your use, or stop using crystal, you will likely go through very distinct stages.

Almost everyone who quits crystal goes through them. Each stage is described on the following pages. You'll see that each stage has its own challenges, rewards, and advice for handling both.

You may find it helpful to mark these stages on a calendar as the time frame is often that predictable. That way you can watch your progress and prepare for what lies ahead.





MENTAL HEALTH

It's well documented that mental and emotional difficulties are at the root of many drug and alcohol dependencies.

While drugs and alcohol can intensify, or even initiate mental health and emotional problems, it is often the case that an addiction is the result of pre-existing mental health problems.

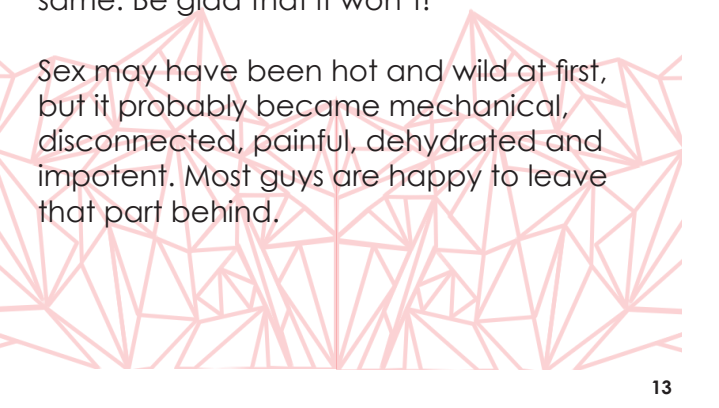
Drug problems are usually the result of self-medicating for depression, anxiety, bi-polar, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders (ADD/ADHD), as well as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

When considering quitting crystal meth, it's important that you find a good counsellor and look at the underlying reasons that you turned to crystal meth in the first place. There are resources listed at the back of this booklet.

WHAT ABOUT SEX AFTER CRYSTAL?

You can have great sex after crystal even if you are worried that sex will never be the same. Be glad that it won't!

Sex may have been hot and wild at first, but it probably became mechanical, disconnected, painful, dehydrated and impotent. Most guys are happy to leave that part behind.



RECLAIM YOUR SEX LIFE WITHOUT CRYSTAL

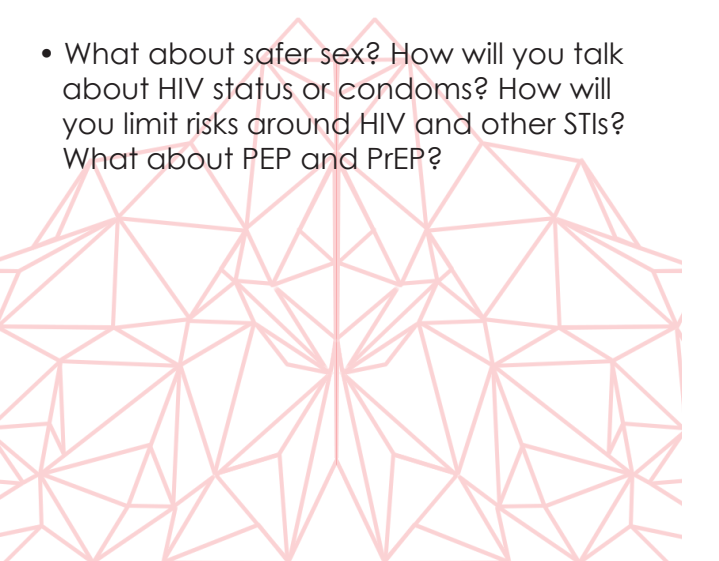
AT FIRST:

- Chat rooms, websites, certain kinds of porn, and bathhouses can be a slippery slope. If you're going there, why are you honestly? Is it for sex, or are you really looking for drugs?
- Think twice before dating or fucking guys you meet in early recovery. Emotions can be raw, volatile, and skewed.
- Find less risky ways to take care of your sexual urges. Play safer.
- Trust that you will have sex again. Lots of guys have recovered from Tina. Are you throwing a pity party about sex as an excuse to get high?

“Don’t compare your recovery with anyone else’s. Focus on who you are now, who you were then, and who you still want to become.”



BEFORE SEX STARTS AGAIN:

- Get to know your sexual self again. Maybe you changed or got lost in crystal. What turns you on now? What satisfied you before you started using?
 - Rethink your values about sex. What do you really want from relationships? Sex?
 - Sex is about a connection. What would feel connecting for you?
 - Trust your gut as to when it feels okay to start having sex again. If you can't even jerk off without thinking about drugs, you might not be ready.
 - Get tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), even if you fear the results or don't feel or see any symptoms. A lot of STIs can be cured, and all STIs, even HIV can be treated.
 - What about safer sex? How will you talk about HIV status or condoms? How will you limit risks around HIV and other STIs? What about PEP and PrEP?
- 

WHEN SEX DOES HAPPEN

The first few times can feel awkward and embarrassing. You might feel self-conscious about your looks or worry about how your body will function.

Emotional connection or actually knowing someone before sex can help ease fear and anxiety.

Be prepared for how much you will actually feel physically and emotionally. Pleasure, pain, confusion, thrill, love – anything can happen without crystal to numb it.

Sex off of crystal, or sober sex, feels different and is supposed to feel different. It can feel less intense, but also with less anxiety. It may move a bit more slowly, but also feels calmer and less rushed.

Your ass and cock will be less sore and chaffed. It is more about being with the person as they are, and being as you are, and less about striving for out-of-the-room porn fantasies.

“Sometimes sex on Tina can make you feel ashamed once you’re done.”





A lot of guys feel disconnected or nervous about running into each other outside of sex on Tina. Some guys forget having had sex while on Tina.

With sober sex, there is often no shame after you come, no embarrassment about running into each other on the street, and the benefit of remembering your sexual encounter together.

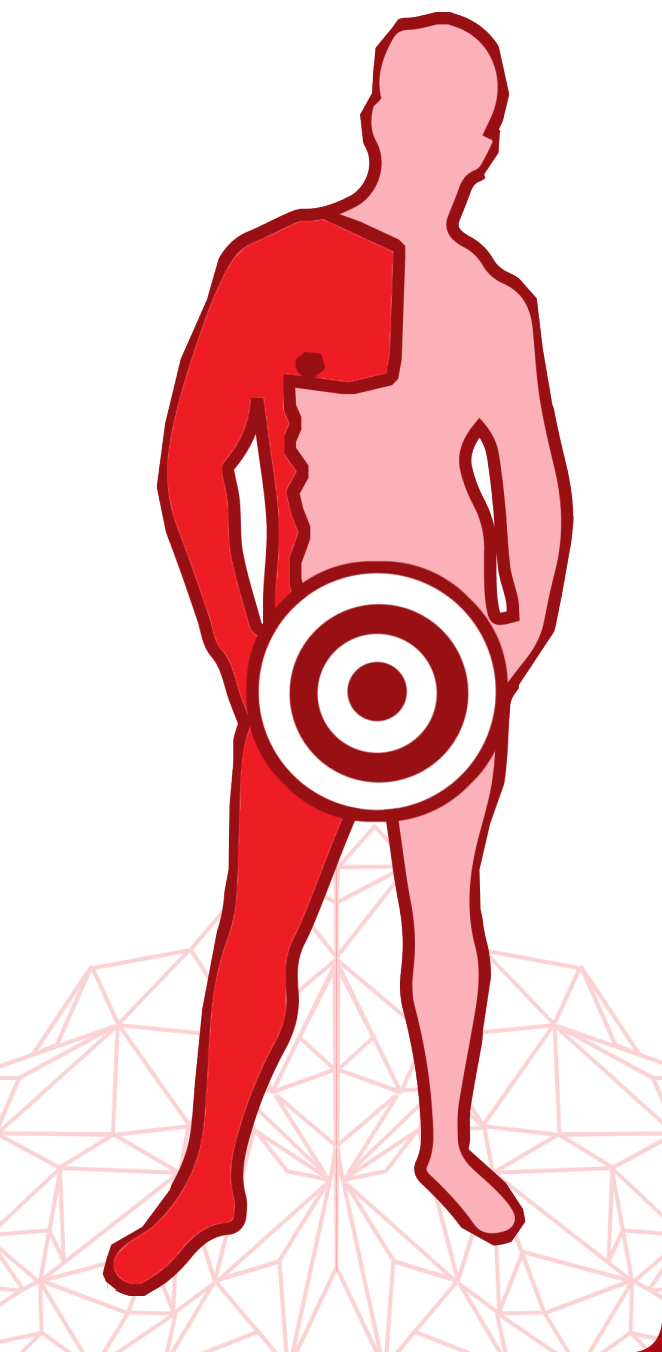
Talk about how you feel with your partner. Set limits on what feels safe for you. It's okay to take a break or even stop if you feel freaked out.

It's also okay to dive in if it feels good! Make a list for yourself of all the benefits that can come from sex without Tina.



GOOD THINGS ABOUT SEX WITHOUT CRYSTAL

- *A dick that works!*
- *You shit better, which makes anal sex better*
- *Actually feeling and experiencing it*
- *Sensations throughout your body, not just in your cock or ass*
- *Not feeling shame about what you're doing*
- *Not feeling anxious or panicky*
- *A sense of respect for yourself*
- *A sense of respect for the guy you're with*
- *Sexual encounters you remember*
- *No awkwardness or shame running into your sex partners*



What to Expect

0 - 2 Weeks

We feel crazy as our body and brain re-learn how to work without meth.

WHAT'S TOUGH:

- *Need to eat and sleep a lot, hard to set a pattern*
- *Cravings can be frequent and hard to manage*
- *Raw, swinging emotions: fear, anger, depression, hopelessness*
- *May still hear voices*
- *No energy or motivation: Hard to follow through on anything*
- *Grieving, sense of loss*

WHAT'S GOOD:

- *The repair begins!*
- *Slowly getting in touch with reality*

ADVICE:

- *Sleep and eat as much healthy food as you want*
- *Keep your goals small: baby steps*
- *Lay low and ride it out*
- *It will get better!*

You have a lot of strengths to draw upon from your addiction. Whatever helped you survive crystal can help you succeed in recovery too.

What to Expect

1 Month

Handling day-to-day life again.

WHAT'S TOUGH:

- *Cravings can still be intense*
- *Changes in how body looks and feels*
- *Weight gain*
- *Frustration at how long it can take to get services or treatment*
- *Sexual urges resurface*

WHAT'S GOOD:

- *Cravings do ease up*
- *Clarity!*
- *Wow, you look so much better!*
- *Feeling healthier*
- *Getting support where you don't expect it*

ADVICE:

- *Keep busy, build a routine*
- *Tell others that you have stopped using. They may not judge you as badly as you judge yourself.*
- *Limit situations that could make you feel really good or really bad*
- *Let go of feeling fat, buy new pants and move on*
- *Look at what you have achieved so far*
- *Write down some goals on paper!*

Telling others about your addiction or recovery is like coming out of the closet again. It's hard to do, but it lifts the burden.

What to Expect

1-3 Months

Cleaning up the damage and feeling “normal” again.

WHAT'S TOUGH:

- Sexual urges
- Cravings can still be hard to manage
- Shame, sense of personal failure
- Too much or too little to do
- Loneliness

WHAT'S GOOD:

- Briefer and less intense cravings, plus more confidence to handle them
- Jobs, housing, money coming together
- Seeing more success, “I can do this”
- Trust in self and others replace paranoia
- Re-connecting with friends, family
- Get connected to support groups

ADVICE:

- It's easy to get over-ambitious, pace yourself
- Connect with other people even if you don't want to
- Be clear about what you need from people and what you can give. It's okay to have really firm rules at first.
- Talk about your feelings
- Sex can wait if it triggers you
- Don't put too much pressure on yourself and appreciate how far you've come
- When you feel triggered, talk about it

What to Expect

3 Months

Thrill of recovery hits “the wall.”

WHAT'S TOUGH:

- Recovery and life get boring!
- New joys slow down
- Depression, feeling alone
- Realizing what you lost or did to your loved ones
- Feeling like nothing has changed in your life
- Unexpected triggers (running into dealer, finding an old baggy, etc.)

WHAT'S GOOD:

- Feeling confident
- Self-forgiveness
- The feeling and comfort of meaningful, supportive relationships

DANGER OF RELAPSE MAY PEAK HERE

- Two big pitfalls: feeling over-confident or not appreciating your progress
- If you feel “it’s not working for me,” hang in there. It’s working.
- The key is to ramp up your recovery, physical and social activities
- Ask about medication for depression or anxiety if you need to

If you lose faith, think about your worst day on crystal.

What to Expect

4-6 Months

A new you starts to take hold.

WHAT'S TOUGH:

- *Feeling emotions, often in big swings.*
- *Confusion about what's next in life and relationships*
- *Boredom*
- *Seeing potential payoffs but feeling depressed if they seem far away.*

WHAT'S GOOD:

- *Feeling less shame, more self-forgiveness*
- *Connecting more, taking more proactive steps*
- *Feeling more productive*
- *Dealing with your real issues*

ADVICE:

- *Change up your recovery routine with new meetings or groups*
- *Consider the role of other drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes in your life*
- *Get into an exercise routine*
- *Take a fresh look at your triggers - they may be different now*
- *Start exploring the underlying reasons you were using crystal*

Celebrate your successes with something other than using. Getting high is the wrong reward!

What to Expect

6-12 Months

Life gets into a healthy rhythm.

WHAT'S TOUGH:

- *Feeling over-confident*
- *Lose sight of your wellness plan because you feel good or no longer remember the bad*
- *Resentment that others don't have the same challenges as you*
- *Disappointment that you don't have everything you thought you would by now*
- *What worked before might not work anymore*

WHAT'S GOOD:

- *Handling challenges with honesty and integrity and liking what you find*
- *Making plans for the future and follow through*
- *Getting to know more about yourself and liking what you discover*
- *Really satisfying relationships*
- *Important rewards: supports, housing, work*
- *Discovering new interests*

ADVICE:

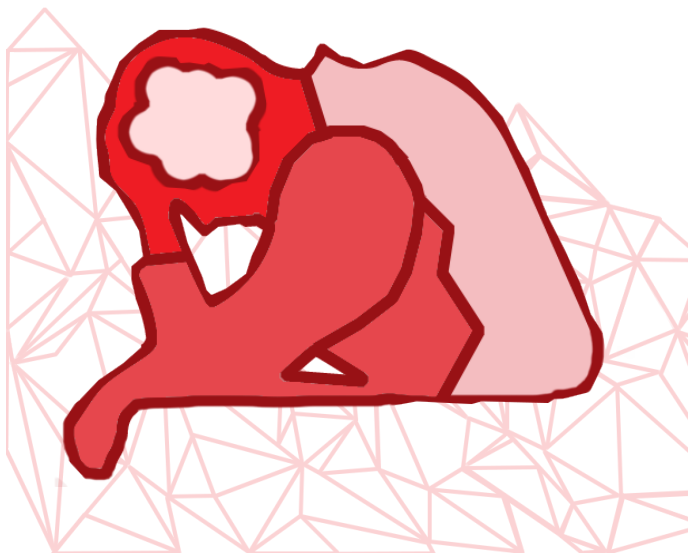
- *Balance your life with more non-recovery activities and hobbies*
- *Vary your recovery routine*
- *Stay tuned in to your feelings and express them*
- *Take care of health issues*


When Relapse Happens

While relapse is normal, be careful of using this as an excuse to go back to using in the ways that are not good for you. Relapse may be common, but it's not a requirement, and there are things you can do to decrease it from happening, and eventually stop it from happening all together.

A "slip" is an instance of unplanned use after a period of not using, quickly followed by a return to your goal of abstinence, or reduced/managed-use.

Slips can have unpleasant impacts, but are often less damaging than a full relapse, or return to previous use patterns.

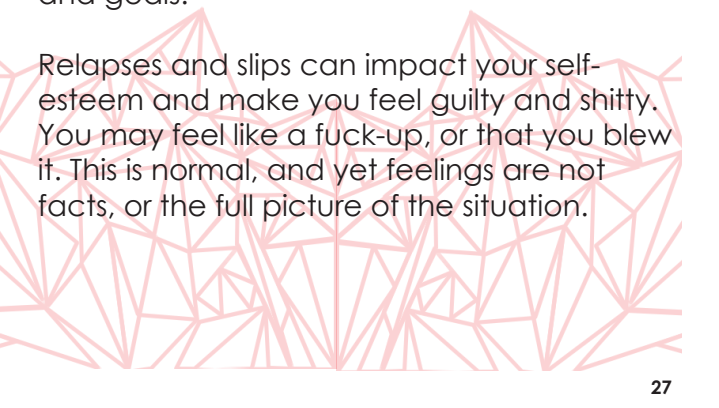


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“A relapse is a return to the way you used to use, before you started to make changes. Relapses last longer than slips.”

It is common that after a relapse or slip to isolate: shutting out the people you used Tina with, while at the same time feeling too embarrassed to connect with your recovery supports and friends who don't use.

This void is lonely and frustrating. It is more helpful to get honest with what happened ASAP. As soon as you let your support circle know that you've relapsed, you will come out of the void, and get back to your plans and goals.

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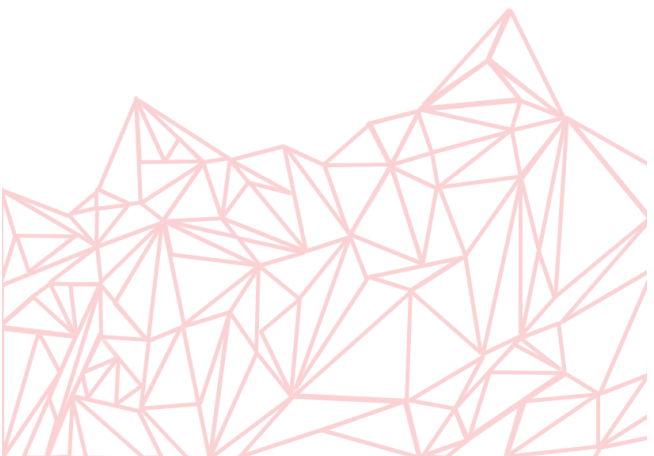
Relapses and slips can impact your self-esteem and make you feel guilty and shitty. You may feel like a fuck-up, or that you blew it. This is normal, and yet feelings are not facts, or the full picture of the situation.

You had some time before your relapse or slip when you were sober, or managing your use. This was a time of actual positive change and an accomplishment. To ignore this is just beating yourself up.

It is more helpful to reframe relapses or slips as learning opportunities that you can reflect on, and incorporate into your goal of reduced/managed using or sobriety.

Maybe you forgot to block the number of that fuck buddy you used to party with, who called you out of the blue. Or, you underestimated the impact of spending the whole weekend working without any fun would have on you.

Take some time with your support networks and write down what your learning is. That way your relapse or slip becomes woven into and your recovery path, and transform it from just a mistake into a step forward.



RELAPSE RED FLAGS

Are you ...

- *Thinking more about how, when, where, and with whom you might get high again?*
- *Feeling bored? Not taking steps to build activities into your day?*
- *Overdoing anything? Working or exercising non-stop or spending hours of time online each day?*
- *Making or finding excuses to skip groups, meetings or appointments with non-using friends?*
- *Lying to yourself or others? Being secretive?*
- *Using other drugs, or drinking more?*
- *Believing your problem is completely fixed?*
- *Isolating yourself?*
- *Obsessing about weight or quick ways to lose it?*
- *Obsessing about sex or quick ways to get it?*

If you think you're in any of these places, read on for some great advice!

When Both of You Quit

ADVICE FOR COUPLES

You cannot get sober for the other person. You have to do recovery because you want it. Using the other person as a motivator often builds resentment.

Many couples worry, "Will we still like each other?"

Don't let the fear of change keep you from moving forward. If you take the risk of losing each other, you may actually find new reasons you want to stay together.

Go to separate treatment programs or counsellors. You each need your own time and space. Find a different counsellor for any therapy you do as a couple.





***“Don’t compare recoveries.
It’s not a competition.”***

Make an agreement to not talk about the bad things you did to each other while high. You can’t undo them. You are different people now.

Use tough love for your own well-being. Be willing to say to your partner, “If you relapse, I will have to step away from you.” You have to be able to disconnect.






TIPS FOR REBUILDING TRUST

Doing what you say you'll do is a way to rebuild trust and rapport. Follow through on what you say you'll do and where you'll be. If you don't think you can do something, or like you are over-committing, do not say you'll do it. Be honest.

Communicate openly even if it feels hard to do. It is normal to feel like being open and honest is difficult. It is hard for everybody sometimes.

Describing what you are feeling can take some of the intensity out of it and creates some emotional distance from the subject.

“Remind yourself that you will feel much better once you have said what you need to say, than you do by not saying it.”





The more you communicate, the easier it becomes. You can ease into open and honest conversations by naming what you are feeling to another person, such as:

- *"I am feeling angry/afraid/nervous/anxious about something."*

You can also describe that you want to talk about something that is hard to talk about:

- *"I am having a hard time with something. Can I talk to you about it?"*
- *"I need help with something, but don't know how to say it."*
- *"This is really hard for me to say, can you help me say it?"*



SPECIAL ADVICE FOR HIV-POSITIVE GUYS

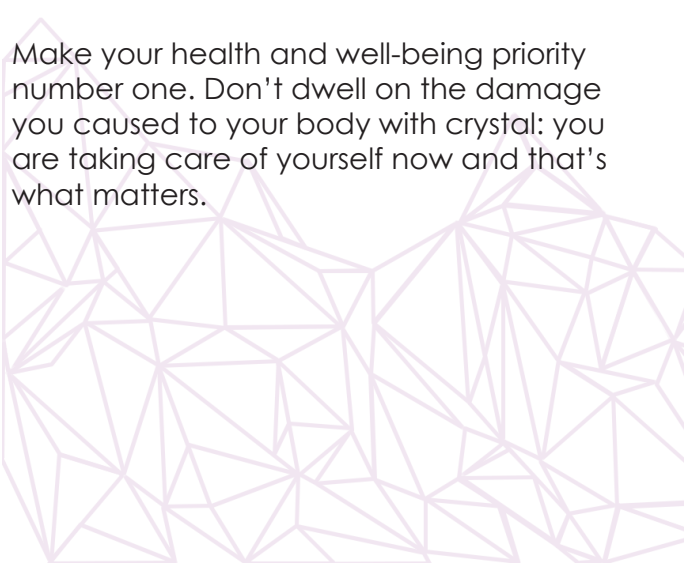
If you are HIV-positive, or have put yourself or others at risk of transmitting HIV, because of using Tina, it is important to forgive yourself.

Feeling bad for possibly putting yourself or others at risk is understandable; it may even be a motivator for managing/reducing or not using. However, feeling shameful or guilty beyond that is not helpful or productive towards your recovery.

Your body might take longer to get balanced again. You might feel more tired. That's frustrating when you're so ready for recovery but your body isn't.

Watch how that adds to depression and seek support for this by talking with your doctor, friends or a worker at an AIDS Services Organisation.

Make your health and well-being priority number one. Don't dwell on the damage you caused to your body with crystal: you are taking care of yourself now and that's what matters.





Get a medical check-up as soon as you can. Be honest with your doctor about everything.

Connect with a case manager. Plug into services that can help. There are such services at the end of this resource that specialise in helping guys with staying off crystal across Canada.

WATCH FOR THESE RELAPSE TRIGGERS:

- *Many guys are surprised when even small changes in how their bodies feel can make them think of crystal*
- *Feeling discouraged if your health gets worse*
- *Feeling like “letting loose” if your health really improves*

AVOIDING RELAPSE FOR GUYS WHO INJECT

First, you are not worse off because you slammed crystal. There is a lot of judgement about injection drug use. You don't have to feel more shame.

Sometimes guys who inject isolate: your world can become very small, and it can be hard to be out in public. In recovery you may struggle to make connections. Start slow — one person at a time.

Triggers are often more intense. This is because injecting crystal produces a strong high, and so the addiction can be stronger than if you used other methods of consumption.

You may miss the ritual of slamming almost as much as the high. When you start to feel the “rush” firing through your body, do anything to stop the thoughts.



AVOIDING RELAPSE FOR GUYS WHO SMOKE

Similar to injecting, smoking crystal is accompanied by a ritual that can be as much a part of the addiction as the drug itself. Smoking crystal produces an intense high as well.

Remember to take it slowly. Reconnect with one person at a time and take things one day at a time.

Smoking any drug can irritate your lungs, which over time can lead to problems like asthma and emphysema. Smoking meth uses up larger quantities of the drug much faster than if snorting or swallowing. You also get high much quicker with a more intense high than through swallowing or snorting.

Before you hit the pipe, decide how much you're going to use and stick to that amount. You can also decrease the frequency of hitting the pipe after your first hit.



HARM REDUCTION TIPS

Sometimes it's easier to make changes in how you use before cutting down your use altogether. Some guys also manage their use by practicing harm reduction.


Here are some strategies that other crystal meth users have found useful. For more information on each strategy, check out some of the referrals at the end of this booklet.

IF YOU ARE ABOUT TO USE

Decide how much you are going use in advance and limit yourself to that. It's hard to hold to limits once you're high, and easy to overdo it.

Divide your packet of Tina into smaller amounts and use from there. Potency between batches can vary. Sample tiny amounts in an environment you feel comfortable.

Check the quality of Tina in bright light. Good quality meth should look like tiny white or clear crystal shards. Other colours indicate poor quality or even a bad batch, which can give you a crappy high and intense crash.



Buy in crystal form, as powdered meth often has other stuff added to it. Talk with your dealer about purity and about the methods you will be taking your Tina.

If you feel sketchy (e.g. paranoid and agitated) sleep is the cure. Even mini-naps, or laying in bed with your eyes closed listening to chill music helps.

Get yourself into sleep-mode, by taking a shower, and creating a serene environment. Consider a natural sleep aid such as melatonin or 5htp.

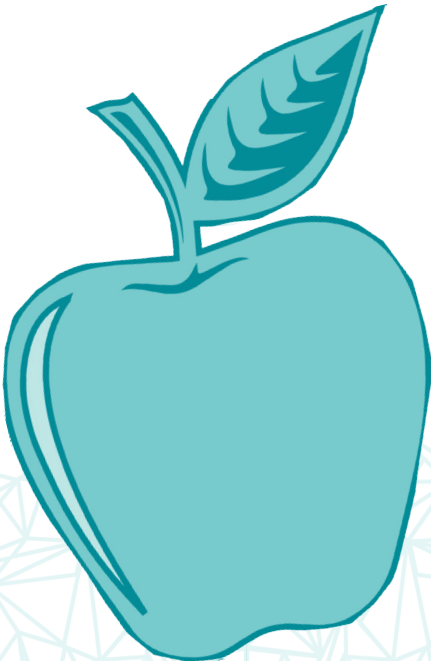
While it can be risky to mix uppers with downers, some guys report using benzodiazepines (e.g. clonazepam, lorazepam and valium) to help sleep.

“Party with someone you can talk with about Tina, who knows the drug, and who you can check in with you while you use.”

IF YOU ARE HIV-POSITIVE

Remember to take your meds. If you party away from home, bring them with you. Set an alarm to take them at the right time. Plan your food intake for meds that require food.

Ritonivir (Norvir) and Elvitegravir/Cobicistat/TDF/FTC (Stribild) increase the amount of Tina in your system. If you take these meds, you need less meth to get high.





IF YOU ARE USING RIGHT NOW

Meth dehydrates you. Your body needs water to handle the stress of the drug. You are dehydrated if your pee is dark yellow, your skin is itchy, and your mouth and eyes are dry.

Avoid or reduce caffeine, alcohol and sugary drinks that will dehydrate you further. Staying hydrated will make your high better and your crash easier.

Although Tina suppresses appetite, you still need to eat. Try and maintain close to your usual caloric intake to avoid starving your body and brain of nutrients.

You burn more calories on Tina. If you can't eat when you are high, at least eat before you use and as soon as you come down. Eating even a small amount helps with the come down and assists with sleep.

Apple sauce, bananas, protein shakes, Ensure®, oatmeal, and yogurt are easiest to get down. Have easy-to-take food on hand, and consume even a little bit.

Avoid foods that are high in processed sugar, like desserts or sodas, as they make mood swings worse and increase drug cravings.

SNORTING

Use your own straw or bumper to reduce the risk of sinus infections and transmitting Hep C. Saline spray or warm salt water snorted up each nostril after snorting flushes out residual drug and toxins, and assists with recovery of nasal passages.

IF YOU'RE INJECTING

If you do inject, there are ways to do it more safely. The Canadian HIV/AIDS Treatment Information and Exchange network (CATIE) provide a guide to safer injection online, called Sharp Shooters:

**[librarypdf.catie.ca/pdf/
ATI-70000s/70095.pdf](http://librarypdf.catie.ca/pdf/ATI-70000s/70095.pdf)**

Use alcohol swabs, fresh cotton and your own brand new needle each time you use. Use new works each time you inject to reduce transmission of HIV, Hep C and bruising from dull needles. Clean the spot you hit to avoid abscesses and infection.

If you are starting off your journey of staying off crystal, switching from injecting to another method of consumption may be helpful, as injecting has more risks than other ways of taking crystal.

IF YOU'RE SMOKING

Use a tempered glass/Pyrex bowl pipe. Add only small amounts of meth and heat gently. Do not over-heat, as too much vapor can cause an overdose.

Meth liquefies when heated, so avoid tinfoil or anything open-ending, to avoid spilling hot liquid. Also, do not use un-tempered glass such as light bulbs or bottles to avoid injury. Un-tempered glass can explode when heated.

OTHER STIMULANT DRUGS

Any drug that raises your blood pressure, such as Ecstasy/MDMA, crack/cocaine and even energy drinks like Red Bull®, can cause heart strain if taken with crystal.

Consider not taking crystal with other stimulant drugs, especially if you have any concerns about your heart.

ANTI-DEPRESSANTS

Taking crystal with anti-depressants can spike your blood pressure to dangerously high levels. Please check with your doctor if your anti-depression medications have this effect.




SAFER SEX FOR GUYS WHO ARE USING

Tina can make it hard to get hard and stay hard. This is called “Crystal Dick” and is normal when using Tina. Just roll with it – play sessions can last longer.

Some guys use erectile drugs, or hard-ons, to combat Crystal Dick, but this can be risky. Erectile drugs lower your blood pressure, while crystal raises it, pulling it in opposite directions.

This puts strain on your heart. It's very important not to add poppers to the mix: poppers when taken with erectile drugs can induce a stroke.



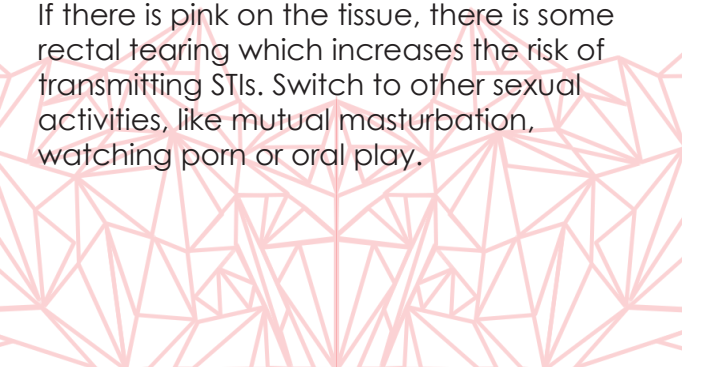


“Do not add both poppers and hard-on drugs to the mix. If you use one, do not use the other.”

Plan whether you want to have condomless or safer sex before you get high. Party with friends and fuck buddies who want to have the same kind of sex as you.

Sex on Tina can be rough and prolonged, leading to sore or bleeding asses and chaffed cocks. Gently wipe your ass with a tissue between sex sessions to check for ‘pinking.’

If there is pink on the tissue, there is some rectal tearing which increases the risk of transmitting STIs. Switch to other sexual activities, like mutual masturbation, watching porn or oral play.



IF YOU WANT TO HAVE CONDOMLESS SEX

Talk to your partners about HIV-status: yours and theirs. Fuck with guys whose status you know.

Consider getting on PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) if you have condomless sex regularly with multiple partners.

PrEP is the use of HIV medication by someone who is HIV-negative before contact with HIV to help prevent infection. Find a doctor who can talk to you further about PrEP.

If managing an undetectable viral load, or using PrEP is part of your safer sex strategy, know that some of the toxins in Tina, coupled with not sleeping, and missing the times you need to take HIV meds can increase viral load.

If you have unplanned condomless sex and think you may have put yourself at risk of getting HIV, consider going to an ER and getting on PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis).

If you take PEP within 72 hours of the instance, it will eliminate the possibility of HIV-transmission.

Get tested for HIV and STIs three weeks after having condomless sex with partners whose HIV status you do not know, or after sharing injection drug works.



Get tested every 3 months if you are regularly having condomless sex. All STIs are treatable and most are curable.

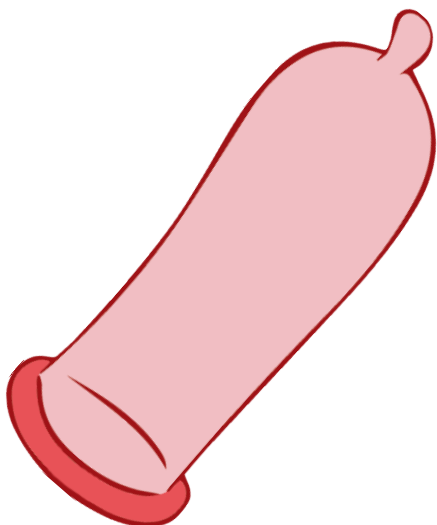
Use silicone-based lube. It lasts longer than water-based lube.

IF YOU ARE USING CONDOMS

Sex on Tina can be rough on condoms and cause them to break. Check regularly that condoms are intact. Even if they are intact, put on a new condom every 20-30 minutes.

If you are fucking with more than one guy, use a new condom when you change partners.

Reality condoms (aka insertive, or 'female' condoms) can be a fun alternative and feel just like fucking bare for the top.



IF YOU ARE TRYING TO CUT DOWN

MAKE A PROS-CONS LIST

Write down all the reasons why you want to cut down your use and the benefits you will receive by doing so. Write down the things about using that are bothering you, or that you are worried about.

Put this list somewhere you can access easily, like your phone. Review daily, adding to it as you think of more reasons.

KEEP A USE JOURNAL

Write down how much Tina you use, when and where you use, and how much money you spend on Tina, and Tina-related expenses.

When you are crashing or sober, write how you felt after each time you used. Do this for a month or longer. This will give you a factual look at your use.

Some guys take photos or video record what they look like when they're using to watch later when they're sober.

PAY YOURSELF FIRST

Pay your bills and purchase essentials such as groceries, as soon as you get paid or consider setting up prepayment so that you have less money to spend on Tina.

Some guys make arrangements with family, or other supports to help monitor and manage access to money, to avoid spending it all on Tina.



TRIGGER MANAGEMENT

Avoid and minimize situations and people who remind you of using Tina. Spend as much time as possible in non-using environments, with non-using friends, family and other people.

Get rid of all drug paraphernalia and anything that reminds you of wanting to get high. Delete online accounts and subscriptions, as well as cutting off your access to any porn associated with getting high.





STAY BUSY AND PLAN YOUR FUN

Schedule activities ahead of time, so that you are busy during the times you used to use, so you don't get bored or tempted. Make commitments with other people so you are less likely to change your mind and get high.

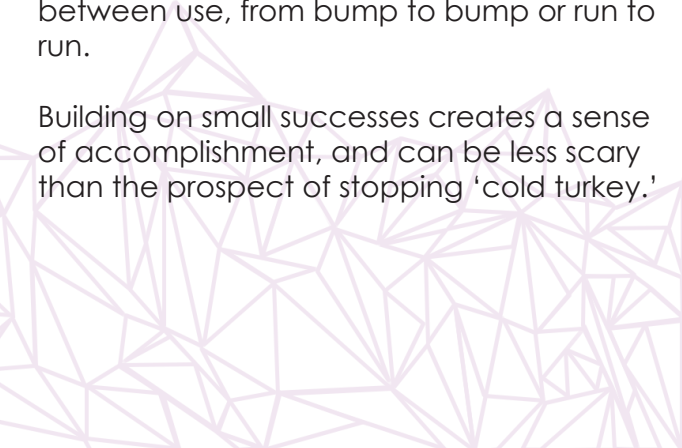
Set up work activities, social, physical and volunteering commitments. It is important to not throw yourself only into work as this can feel like you are punishing yourself, and thus increase the possibility you might cave and go use to relieve the pressure.

Make sure you plan for fun activities as well and downtime where you won't be bored, as boredom is a big trigger. Take time to explore things that would be fun for you to do that are not related to using.

USE TINA LESS AND LESS OFTEN

Stretch out the time between hits. Wait 20 minutes this time, then 30 minutes the next time, and so on. Cut down the time between use, from bump to bump or run to run.

Building on small successes creates a sense of accomplishment, and can be less scary than the prospect of stopping 'cold turkey.'



HYDRATION

Drink lots of water fluids to support your body when in withdrawal. Keep caffeinated drinks to a minimum, as they can dehydrate you further.

They slow down your detox and make crashing symptoms worse. Alcohol is also dehydrating.

PRACTICE GOOD ORAL CARE

Tina, especially when smoked, dries out the mouth which means more plaque. Brush, floss and rinse with mouthwash regularly to reduce risk of gum recession, infection and tooth decay.

Sugarless gum is helpful for this, as well as with amphetamine-related teeth grinding. See your dentist regularly.



“Reducing use can feel like deprivation. It is important to support your goals with rewards other than using Tina.”

REWARD YOURSELF IN OTHER WAYS

Some guys put the money they save from not using towards something of lasting value. Explore self-care (e.g. massage) spending time with friends who you have been too busy to see, or channel your newfound energy into physical activity you enjoy.

Rewarding yourself can be as simple as eating well. Social supports are as important as clinical ones. Lots of guys find joining a social group, such as an LGBT activities club or community group to be helpful.



IDENTIFY YOUR VALUES

Using Tina is behaviour, and behaviours can be changed. One of the things that can help you change any behaviour is to identify your values. Behaviours are things that you do; values are things that you believe deeply and hold dear.

When 2 behaviours come into conflict, such as using Tina versus not using Tina, both sides can seem equally good, but also equally bad, of equal weight and importance; this can have you feeling like you are going circles.

Values are stronger than behaviours. When a value and behaviour do not agree, it is the behaviour that will move.

A helpful activity for figuring out your values is to make a list of your top 10 values. You can find a list of values to get you going by going to:

www.motivationalinterviewing.org/content/personal-values-card-sort

Journal about your values, about what values you can use to help you reduce using Tina, as well as what values you need to keep satisfied through ways other than using Tina.

Sharing your values with a friend, counselor or worker will make this activity more helpful.



SEEK SUPPORT

One of the most powerful ways to cut down your use is to reach out and get help. What follows is a list of agencies and services who can help you do just that.



Resources



Suicide

Coming down off Tina can be rough. It can leave you feeling exhausted, aggressive, paranoid, and in some cases even suicidal. There are hotlines across Canada if you need to talk to someone about suicidal thoughts and feelings.

CALL 9-1-1

Or check out this site for a hotline near you:
www.suicide.org/hotlines/international/canada-suicide-hotlines.html

PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Often offer harm reduction and addictions services and supports. Check your local public health department, as well as regional CHC websites for info.

RECREATION

Recreation is an important part of managing Tina. Many guys find it helpful to change routines and seek support outside of professional systems. You can find activities through local LGBT community print and web resources.

National Resources

CATIE

Canada's Source for HIV and Hep C Information.

Toll-free: 1-800-263-1638

(CATIE accepts collect calls from Canadian prisons, 416-203-7122).

catie.ca

hepCinfo.ca

CRYSTAL METH ANONYMOUS

Check for meetings in Canadian cities.

crystalmeth.org

COCAINE ANONYMOUS

ca-on.org

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

canaacna.org

CANADIAN HARM REDUCTION NETWORK

Directory of harm reduction services

Tel: 416-928-0979

canadianharmreduction.com

Regional Resources

SERVICES IN REGIONAL ONTARIO

ONTARIO HARM REDUCTION DISTRIBUTION

Program (OHRDP)

Toll free: 1-866-316-2217

ohrdp.ca

THE MAINLINE

Harm Reduction, IDU, Needle Exchange

1-800-686-7544

211 ONTARIO

Online directory of programs and services
across Ontario

211ontario.ca

QUEBEC

CACTUS MONTREAL

514-847-0067

cactusmontreal.org/en

RÉZO

(formerly Sero-Zero)

514-521-7778 or info@rezosante.org

rezosante.org/accueil.html

SERVICES IN THE ATLANTIC REGION

AIDS COMMITTEE OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

709-579-8656

acnl.net

AIDS COALITION OF NOVA SCOTIA

902-425-4882

acns.ns.ca

HORIZON HEALTH NETWORK, ADDICTIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

(New Brunswick)

506-452-5558

en.horizonnb.ca

HEALTH PEI

Addiction Services

Toll-free: 1-888-299-8399

healthpei.ca/addictions

SERVICES IN THE PRAIRIES

ADDICTIONS SERVICES GUIDE

calgaryaddiction.com

AIDS PROGRAMS SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN

Harm-reduction services and addictions counselling

aidsprogramssouthsask.com

AIDS SASKATOON

306-242-5005

aidssaskatoon.ca

SMART RECOVERY ALBERTA

A Self-Help Alternative to AA.

403-619-4210

smartrecovery.ca

HEAT HIV EDUCATION AND AWARENESS TODAY

AIDS Calgary

hivcl.org

RAINBOW RESOURCE CENTRE MANITOBA

204-474-0212

rainbowresourcecentre.org

WINNIPEG GAY MEN'S HEALTH CLINIC

204-478-5006

gmhc.ca

SERVICES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

ACCESS CENTRAL

Centralized access to withdrawal management services and addiction housing

Toll free: 1-866-658-1221

AIDS VANCOUVER ISLAND (AVI) HARM REDUCTION SERVICES

Services provided in Victoria, Nanaimo, Courtenay, Campbell River, and Port Hardy

Toll free Info Line: 1-800-665-2437

avi.org/HRS

HIGH LIFE AT HIM (HEALTH INITIATIVE FOR MEN)

Harm Reduction and counseling for gay men

Phone: 604-488-1001

checkhimout.ca/highlife

PRISM ALCOHOL AND DRUG SERVICES

For LGBTQ2S community members

604-658-1214

vch.ca/prism

VANCOUVER ADDICTIONS MATRIX PROGRAM (VAMP)

16-week outpatient stimulant addiction treatment program:

vch.ca/403/7676/?program_id=11036

SERVICES IN TORONTO

SPUNK!

Harm reduction support group for gay, bisexual and trans guys.

416-340-8484 ext. 235

actoronto.org/spunk

CENTRE FOR ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH (CAMH)

Rainbow Services

Addictions counseling for LGBTQ individuals, couples and groups.

Toll free: 1-800-463-2338 ext. 4647

camh.net

OUT & OUT TORONTO

North America's Largest LGBT activities and recreation club.

outandout.ca

TORONTO WITHDRAWAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES

1-866-366-9513

THE WORKS

Safer injection and inhalation supplies and support

416-392-0520

toronto.ca/health/sexualhealth/sh_the_works.htm

Staying Off Crystal is a project of the
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AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT)

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Coordinator

399 Church Street, 4th Floor

Toronto ON M5B 2J6

416.340.8484 ext. 235

harmreduction@actontario.org

www.actontario.org

