

Safer Smoking Instructor Guide

WHCP & NYHRE

SAM SANTOSCOY, MPH &
L. SYNNE STERN, RN, MPH



United for Change

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Section I:

Step-by-Step: How to Smoke More Safely

A. Smoking Crack Cocaine:

1. Make a plan before you use to avoid unnecessary harm and wasting money

- Before you use, decide how much you're going to use and put aside money that you will need for other expenses, like food or rent. Ask a reliable friend to hold on to your cash or card if that'll make it easier.
- Plan to use in a safe place with people you trust, and make sure to eat a nutritious meal before smoking.
 - Eating food beforehand is recommended since you may forget to afterward, especially since crack will suppress appetite.
- Drink plenty of water before, during, and after smoking to prevent dehydration.
 - Both smoking from a stem and using crack cocaine have multiple dehydrating effects. Inhaling from a hot stem can dry out the mouth and cause lips to crack and bleed. Crack use causes a reduction in fluid production, which leads to side-effects such as dry mouth.
- A crack high is brief (about 15 minutes) but can have lingering effects. Decide on a time to stop smoking so you can rest and be ready for work or other commitments.
- Moisturize lips to prevent them from drying out. Cracked lips open a route for infection, especially if sharing mouthpieces/stems or having oral sex.
- Buy from a source you trust and feel comfortable asking questions about effects and potency. Check for fentanyl with a test strip.
 - See "Resources" for more information on drug checking.

2. Clean hands, stem, and mouthpiece

- Use soap and warm water or antiseptic pads to clean your hands and all smoking equipment.
 - If you need to clean a dirty stem, take an alcohol pad and use the wooden pushstick to insert it through the stem.
 - Cleaning equipment and hands beforehand will reduce the risk of infection due to inhaling dirt and bacteria.

3. Insert the filter (Chore Boy or brass screens)

- Using a wooden pushstick, insert the filter into the stem. The filter will need to be a small distance from the end so there is space to put the crack at the end of the stem.

What type of filter are you using?: WHCP and NYHRE provide pre-rolled Chore Boy (see kit packing guide for instructions if you need to prep it yourself). You can also use brass screens-- roll 5 or 6 screens tightly to insert as a filter. These screens can otherwise easily come loose and be a choking risk when inhaling.

Steel wool is not recommended since it becomes brittle and can be easily inhaled/swallowed.

4. Make sure the filter is secure

- Use the wooden pushstick to push the filter from both sides in order to make sure the filter is tightly secured and will not get sucked in when you smoke. Blow through the stem to test it before putting your drugs in.
 - Blowing through the stem will make sure that the filter is secure but not blocking airflow to prevent inhalation of smoke, as well as removes any pieces of filter that could otherwise be inhaled.

5. Attach your mouthpiece

- A clean mouthpiece is the best option for preventing injury and infection. Slide your mouthpiece over the end of the stem opposite the filter.
 - Using a mouthpiece prevents burns and cuts to the lips, which can cause bleeding and expose you to infection.
- Do *not* share mouthpieces since it increases the risk of infection.
 - Chapped lips are a common side effect of smoking crack, which can cause microscopic bleeding. This means there may be blood left on the stem-- even if you can't see it-- which increases the risk of bacterial or viral infection. For instance, Hepatitis C is confirmed to be infective for up to 6 weeks at room temperature [3].

No mouthpiece?: You can also cover the stem tip with tape, rubber bands, a tourniquet, band-aids, or an empty cardboard matchbook.

Tourniquets are a great alternative when sharing stems since you can unwind the tourniquet and recoil it around the pipe between hits, thus preventing people from placing their mouth in the same areas. Used tourniquets may have dried blood however, and so please be careful to avoid touching already used areas!

6. Move the flame quickly and evenly along the stem

- Briefly touch the flame to the stem end to melt the rock. Then hold the flame next to the stem (not directly on it) and move the flame quickly along its length to spread out the heat. The smaller the flame, the better. This will prevent the stem from getting too hot and hurting your lips or fingers, as well as make a small amount of crack last longer.

- While the glass stem does not heat up as quickly as other materials, it still can get very hot. If too much heat is applied, the stem can crack or burst completely. Crack cocaine easily melts when heated so it shouldn't be difficult to avoid overheating the stem.

7. Put the stem down between hits

- Enjoy your high by letting the hit take effect before you smoke more. Spacing out hits will make your drugs last longer and give you a better idea of how much you need to smoke to get the desired effects. This helps prevent accidentally over-doing it and saves money. It will also keep the pipe from overheating.

B. Smoking Crystal Meth:

Preparing crystal meth (methamphetamine) for smoking is very similar to preparing crack cocaine, but a different tool is used and no filter is needed. After cleaning your hands and surface, follow these steps:

1. Pour crystal meth into the bowl

- Start with a small amount to test the strength. You can always add more after!

2. Tap your bowl gently to ensure the meth is fully inside the bowl

3. Attach your mouthpiece to the stem end

- See step #5 in Step-by-Step: How to Smoke Crack Cocaine More Safely for information on mouthpiece alternatives.

4. Hold the bowl and apply a low heat while turning it. The flame should not touch the bowl!

- Make sure to keep the heat moving around the bowl. Too much heat in one place can burn the crystal meth, which will waste it, and can also cause the bowl to crack.

Did you know?: When you're smoking meth, you're actually vaporizing it! This requires less heat than burning, which is why it's important to be careful.

- To avoid burning your fingers, hold closer to the mouthpiece than the bowl.

5. Once you see vapor, continue heating and inhale slowly, then exhale immediately

- Holding it in won't get you higher and can damage your lungs.

Section II:

Practice After-Care: Hydrate and Sleep

Smoking crack and/or meth is dehydrating, which means it is important to **drink plenty of water!** Dehydration can cause chapped lips to crack and bleed, as well as increases the risk of vaginal and anal tearing when having sex. Each of these injuries increase the risk of bacterial and viral infection, particularly if you are engaging in oral, vaginal, or anal sex. Try to use lip balm or Vaseline to **keep your lips hydrated** and use **water-based lubricant** if you're engaging in vaginal or anal sex.

Also **follow a plan** and stop using so you can go to sleep at a time that you had decided on beforehand. A crack high is short, but there can be lingering effects. These effects are worsened if you're taking multiple hits, which is why it is important to stop smoking with plenty of time to come down before you need to be asleep.

Having trouble sleeping?: Make sure all lights and screens are off and try drinking decaffeinated tea. Smoking cannabis, as well as taking Melatonin or a low-dose antihistamine (e.g., Benadryl), can also help; however, be mindful of mixing substances that can increase adverse effects (e.g., Benadryl and heroin). Do not drink alcohol to sleep; while it may help you fall asleep initially, alcohol does not provide restful sleep and also is dehydrating.

Section III:

Safer Smoking Tips

A. Reducing Risk of Injury (Burns, Sores, and Cuts) and Infection:

Although smoking is not as invasive as injecting, there are still risks associated with smoking crack and/or meth, including burns and infection. These two risks also go hand-in-hand: burns or other accidental injury like cuts-- especially on the mouth-- cause the chance of infection to significantly increase.

Here are some steps you can take when smoking to decrease the risk of accidental injuries, including burns, sores, and cuts:

- Use a smoking tool made of Pyrex
 - Unlike other types of stems/bowls, Pyrex does not break or crack as easily.
 - If you're smoking crack, using a straight stem will also not cause burns nearly as quickly as with other materials.

- Use a clean mouthpiece to prevent burning or damaging your lips
 - Using your own, clean mouthpiece is one of the most crucial steps for preventing infection. If you do not have a mouthpiece, you can also wrap the stem ends with tape, rubber bands, a tourniquet, or an empty cardboard matchbook.
 - If you're sharing, a tourniquet is a great option since you can unwind it and re-wind it around the stem between hits. This way, each person uses a fresh surface.
 - Change the mouthpiece when it gets brittle.
- Use a traditional flame lighter instead of a burner or torch lighter
 - Using a lighter with a smaller flame will help prevent burns to the lips and fingers, as well as decrease risk of burns to the lung from breathing in heat from the flame [1].
- Move the flame quickly along the stem/bowl to spread out the heat and prevent burns
 - To avoid burns when smoking crack cocaine, first touch the flame briefly to the stem to melt the rock. Then hold the flame next to the stem, instead of directly on it, and move the flame quickly along to spread out the heat. This stops the stem from getting too hot while still allowing the crack to be smoked. Not only will this prevent lip burns, but it will also make a small amount of drug last longer.
- Pace yourself-- let the stem/bowl cool between hits to avoid burns
 - Savor the first hit and take breaks between hits. Letting your smoking tool cool down before taking your next hit will reduce the likelihood of cuts and burns. Waiting between hits will also give you a better idea of dosage (how much you need for the desired effect). This can help prevent you from accidentally over-doing it and save you money.
- Keep your lips hydrated!
 - Use lip balm or Vaseline often to heal chapped or injured lips. If you have a cut, burn, or other mouth-related injury and do not see an improvement after a week, please consult a doctor.

The risk of infection is also increased by sharing or using unclean equipment. Use your own equipment and make sure to clean your hands and all equipment before use, especially your mouthpiece. You can otherwise be exposed to harmful bacteria and fungi, as well as certain viruses such as HCV. If you must share, use your own mouthpiece and clean everything with alcohol wipes before and after use.

B. Reducing the Risk of Lung-Related Injury:

Using unsafe smoking equipment can cause you to accidentally inhale ash or pieces of metal or plastic, as well as cause burns to the lungs. Burns are also possible from inhaling deeply and torch use/high flames [1]. This can be especially problematic when smoking crack due to its numbing effects, as you may not even notice these issues when smoking.

Please read below to learn how to reduce the risk of infection and other respiratory problems:

NOTE: If you start coughing up dark stuff or have trouble breathing, then please go see a doctor! Try to give your lungs a break by stopping or reducing smoking for awhile.

- Use a Pyrex smoking tool instead of soda cans or plastic bottles
 - Smoking from aluminum cans and plastic bottles can release toxic fumes that increase the risk of lung damage, as well as give a harsh, metallic taste. These materials can break down when heated, causing you to inhale ash, paint, dust, water, and other particles into your lungs while also increasing the chance of burning your fingers or lips. [1]
- If you are smoking from foil ("chasing the dragon"), avoid using foil from candy wrappers since it is often covered with contaminants and tears easily [1].
- If smoking crack, use brass screens or Chore Boy instead of steel wool or Brillo
 - Steel wool and Brillo breaks down when heated, which can cause pieces to be inhaled and cause damage to the lips as well as the throat and lungs. Brillo also has soap and a chemical coating, which can make you sick [6].
 - To prevent the brass screens from coming loose and potentially causing choking when inhaled, five or six screens should be rolled up tightly and pushed into the glass stem using a wooden pushstick, which will make sure they are firmly in place.

C. Crack, Meth, and Dehydration:

Smoking crack and/or crystal meth is dehydrating, which means it is especially important to drink lots of water if you smoke! 8-10 glasses of water is the daily recommended amount to prevent dehydration. If you expect to be using multiple dehydrating substances (e.g., alcohol, tobacco), be sure to drink extra water before, during, and after smoking!

Below are some recommendations to reduce the harms related to dehydration:

- **Dry Mouth:** Protect yourself against dry mouth, which can increase the risk of tooth decay and fungal infections like thrush [2]
 - Dry mouth is a common side effect of smoking crack. Chewing gum after smoking can help keep the mouth hydrated, as well as prevent jaw stiffness. Drinking water or a sugar-free drink, sucking on a hard candy or ice cube, and breathing through your nose will also help reduce dry mouth.
 - Eating sugary foods and poor oral hygiene are major contributors to tooth decay and infection. Make sure to floss and brush regularly!
- **Injury and Infection:** Dehydration increases the risk of cracked lips and vaginal or anal tearing during sex. Be sure to hydrate lips often and use plenty of water-based lube if engaging in vaginal or anal sex. Do not use Vaseline or lotion since this will break the condoms.
 - Put on a fresh condom before switching between vaginal, anal, and oral sex in order to prevent infection. Also try to avoid oral sex if your lips have open cuts or burns.
- **Lung Function:** Dehydration also makes it more difficult to expel build-up in the lungs, which can cause inflammation and infection. This problem is further worsened with tobacco smoking. While hydrating and reducing overall smoking frequency are the most direct ways to address these issues, regular exercise is also recommended to improve lung function. If vigorous aerobic exercise (e.g., running, swimming) sounds too demanding, then go for a brisk walk 20-45 minutes a day. Exercise also provides additional benefits like improved heart health [4].
- **Tobacco and Stimulants:** Tobacco (as well as alcohol and many other drugs) is also dehydrating and so try to avoid combining these substances, or at least cut down when smoking crack or crystal meth. With crack, you're also more likely to draw tobacco smoke deeper into your lungs due to the numbing effect of smoking crack, which increases the risk of lung injury.

D. Managing Effects of Crack and/or Crystal Meth:

Crack and crystal meth have specific psychological and physical effects that can increase the chance of unnecessary harm, especially if they go unnoticed. Be sure to know these effects before smoking so that you can take steps to reduce these harms!

Be aware of smoking crack's effect on your appetite and wakefulness:

- Smoking crack and/or crystal meth decreases appetite and increases wakefulness, which can make it easy to skip meals or sleep.
 - The “crash” associated with crack use is actually caused by the impact of decreased food and sleep fully registering when the drug effects have worn off! [5]
- Plan ahead to make sure you get enough nutrients in your body.
- Try to time your usage so that the effects will wear off by the time you’re planning to sleep.
- If smoking crystal meth, be mindful that this drug has a very duration of action (10-20 hours) [7]. This means that it is especially important to plan ahead in order to make sure that your body has enough rest and nutrients. This long duration can also be very destabilizing, especially if you decide to have a long smoking session, and so it’s also important to plan ahead to make sure that your routine/any scheduled commitments the next day are not disrupted.

Mixing crack with other drugs:

- Two common combinations with crack are opioids (speedballing) and alcohol. Each of these mixes combine a short-acting stimulant with a longer-acting depressant and therefore will disguise how high you may be from the depressant effects. For this reason, it is especially important to keep track of how much you’re taking and when you’ve taken each drug.
- Since the stimulant effects will wear off before the depressant effects, it is highly advised to avoid risky activities (like driving) while mixing drugs, even if you feel capable of doing so. Your condition could suddenly change!
 - NOTE: when smoked, crack cocaine effects will end within ~15 minutes

E. Taking Care of Your Smoking Tool

Stems/Bowls and the Law:

Carrying a used smoking tool can put you at risk for a paraphernalia charge. Be sure to store your stem/bowl in a safe place when it is not being used. Wherever you decide to put your tool, make sure it is safely concealed in a place where it will not break or come into contact with water.

Safe Storage:

Crack: Crack pipes are easy to conceal-- just be especially careful to not hide it in a place where it can be damaged!

Meth: All safer meth smoking kits come with a fitpack for safe and discrete storage. You can also use an eyeglass case and/or wrap it in tissues or a sock.

Cleaning Your Smoking Tool:

Although the residue in a pipe can be *gently* scraped and used, it is also important to clean your pipe regularly in order to help prevent infection and injury from dirt, bacteria, or other things that can get stuck inside.

Cleaning a stem: Cleaning a stem is simple. To clean out the inside of your pipe, take an alcohol pad and use a wooden pushstick to wipe it through your pipe. Be gentle to avoid accidentally damaging your pipe!

Cleaning a bowl: There are many ways to clean a meth pipe. We suggest first letting the bowl cool off completely and then rinsing with water. You can also use alcohol, salt, and vinegar-- or any combination of these.

Our safer meth smoking kits include q-tips, which can be used to scrub any tough spots to make sure your pipe is squeaky clean. Before smoking, it's important that your pipe is completely dry-- these q-tips can also be used to help dry leftover water droplets.

Section IV:

Safer Smoking Tools

A. Safer Crack Smoking Tools:

- Pyrex glass stem:
 - Using a sterile glass pipe is preferable to aluminum cans and plastic bottles, which can release potentially harmful toxins and pieces of metal and plastic into your lungs. Glass stems also do not heat up as quickly, reducing the risk of burns to the lips and fingers.
- Chore Boy:
 - Our kit includes a ball of Chore Boy, which can be inserted into a crack pipe to be used as a filter.
 - Chore Boy is better than fine steel wool, which becomes brittle and can be easily inhaled or swallowed.

- Mouthpiece
 - A hot stem tip can burn and crack lips, causing bleeding and exposing you to infection. Using your own mouthpiece will reduce the risk of injury and infection.
- Wooden pushstick:
 - Using a pushstick to pack filter into a pipe will prevent clogging, swallowing the screen, or inhaling flame.
 - A wooden chopstick is a better alternative than metal or plastic. Using metal can cause damage to the stem by scratching and weakening the glass, causing it to break more easily. Plastic can melt to the stem and give off harmful toxins.
- Antiseptic wipes:
 - Use these wipes to clean your hands before smoking to prevent infection.
- Alcohol pads:
 - Use alcohol pads to clean all smoking equipment before use in order to prevent infection.

B. Before/After Care:

This kit also includes several tools to reduce the harm related to crack's dehydrating effects. Dehydration can increase the risk of infection in several ways, and so be sure to use these tools whenever necessary!

- Sugar-free gum:
 - Smoking crack decreases production of saliva, which causes dry mouth. Although most oral problems (tooth decay, mouth infection) are caused by poor hygiene and eating lots of sugar, dry mouth can increase the risk of these problems.
 - Chewing sugar-free gum will hydrate your mouth and help preserve tooth enamel. It also will help prevent jaw stiffness, which is a common side-effect with crack use.
- Lip balm:
 - To help with chapped lips caused by both dehydration and smoking a hot pipe, this kit also comes with lip balm. Apply this before and after smoking to prevent lips from drying out and cracking.
- Water-based lube:
 - Water-based lube is also included as another means of lubricating dry areas. Use this lube when engaging in anal or vaginal sex to reduce friction caused by dehydration.

C. Safer Meth Smoking Tools

- Pyrex glass bowl:
 - This pyrex material is more resistant to burns and breakage. However, it's still important to handle it with care!
- Mouthpiece
 - A hot stem tip can burn and crack lips, causing bleeding and exposing you to infection. Using your own mouthpiece will reduce the risk of injury and infection.
- Antiseptic wipes:
 - Use these wipes to clean your hands before smoking to prevent infection.
- Alcohol pads:
 - Use alcohol pads to clean all smoking equipment before use in order to prevent infection.
- Lip balm:
 - To help with chapped lips caused by both dehydration and smoking a hot pipe, this kit also comes with lip balm. Apply this before and after smoking to prevent lips from drying out and cracking.
- Q-tips:
 - These are included to help you clean your bowl. Q-tips can reach tight and difficult spot to scrub stubborn stains and wipe away water droplets.

Section V: Resources

Drug Checking:

- Fentanyl Test Kit Insert [WHCP/NYHRE resource]
- The Bunk Police: <http://bunkpolice.com/>
- DanceSafe: <https://dancesafe.org/>

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