Interesting facts on methamphetamine use:

- Australia and New Zealand have one of the highest rates of methamphetamine use in the world.
- Nearly 10% of Australian adults have tried methamphetamine.
- Methamphetamine damages the brain like no other addictive substance.
- Methamphetamine-induced brain damage could be the pre-cursor to Parkinson’s disease.
- Methamphetamine high has been described as “having 10 orgasms all at the same time”.
- The vast structural damage and biochemical changes impact many of the brain’s cognitive processes such as those involved in: self-control, attention, motivation, sleep, mood, memory, appetite, decision making, concentration.
- Methamphetamine begins to change the brain from the first use. Immediate damage is done to the cells of the self-control tract upon the first use of methamphetamine. In other words, meth attacks the self-defence capability first.
- Studies on animal subjects have shown that with 10 days of methamphetamine use the dopaminergic damage incurred took approximately 2 years to recover back to normal production.
- Although the brain damage can be reversed and recovery is possible there is evidence that some cognitive processes never repair.
- Relapse rates are 93% for those in treatment and because of the changes to the brain the propensity for relapse is life long even for the ex-meth user. Hence, regardless of how long the user has been abstinent relapse is a life long potential.
- There is a higher rate of relapse for recovering methamphetamine users who are taking SSRIs.
- The toxic ingredients in Meth lead to severe tooth decay. The teeth and gums rot from the inside out.
- It can take 30-90 days after the last drug use before the user realises they are in withdrawal. This can manifest as depression, loss of energy, apathy and ability to experience pleasure.
- “Tweakers” are those who use high doses of meth repeatedly to maintain intoxication. They are often delusional and extremely violent.
- The most important and first step to recovery is abstinence.
Timeline of recovery from meth in rehabilitation or treatment programme:

**The Withdrawal Stage (0-15 days)**
Exhaustion, insomnia, distorted thinking, memory problems, cravings, depression, low energy and irritability.

**The Honeymoon Stage (16-45 days)**
Overconfidence, difficulty concentrating, continued memory problems, intense feelings, mood swings, other substance abuse, inability to prioritise, Impulsivity.

**The Wall Stage (45-120 days)**
Increased emotions, interpersonal conflict, relapse justification, anhedonia/loss of motivation, insomnia/low energy, fatigue, dissolution of structure, resistance to exercise and paranoia.

**The Adjustment Stage (120-180 days)**
Relaxation of structure, struggle over acceptance of addiction maintenance, emergence of any underlying psychopathology, impulsive behaviour.

**The Maintenance Stage (>180 days)**
Maintaining intervention tools to prevent relapse. Continued treatment for 6 months after this stage is recommended. Potential for relapse is life long.