

Crystal Meth: What parents need to know

The "Just Say No" mantra is not enough to keep your kids safe from potentially lethal drugs, like crystal meth, that are now widely available, especially in smaller communities and rural areas across the province.

The RCMP says they're seeing increasing use of methamphetamines including ecstasy, PCP (angel dust) and this dangerous group's latest deadly addition, crystal meth. While these drugs are available in larger cities, crystal meth use is most prevalent in small town Ontario, police say.

"Cooked up" locally, where there's a ready supply of chemical ingredients that are common in farm products like ammonia, crystal meth can be supplied to kids by people they know and trust.

"Parents in smaller communities may not think this kind of viper drug is available to their kids," says Cynthia Kiy, a social worker at Covenant House, a Toronto youth shelter. "But a great many of the youth we see who are struggling with its serious physical and mental effects have come to us from small town Ontario."

"This drug is so highly addictive that trying it even once can lead kids into a highly dangerous and potentially fatal nightmare that can destroy families," Kiy says.

Are you in the know?

If you don't already know about the dangers of crystal meth, here are a few key facts:

Intense, long-lasting high— Crystal meth is more addictive than crack cocaine or heroin. When inhaled or smoked, it triggers an intense rush or 'flash' and then a feeling of euphoria, loss of appetite and heightened alertness that lasts for up to 12 hours.

Cheap and easy to get— Crystal meth can be had for about \$10 a hit or "point" It

is an odorless, white crystalline powder that also dissolves easily in water or alcohol, although it also comes in capsule form.

Made with toxic chemicals— Also known as ice, glass, crystal or tina, it is made in clandestine, unsanitary amateur labs with easily accessible ingredients like cold medicine, red iodine and phosphorus. It may also include Drano, ammonia and lithium taken from batteries.

Serious health risks— Meth addicts may experience serious adverse psychological effects such as delusions, psychotic episodes and memory loss. They may commit impulsive acts of violence. Long-term use can lead to permanent brain, liver and kidney damage.

Look for warning signs— Sadly, there is no quick fix for this dependency once it takes hold. Parents who notice any drastic changes in their child's personality or habits should look for warning signs such as declining grades, withdrawal from family and friends, erratic behaviour, agitation, extended alertness, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, weight loss and increased demands for money, among others.

Be an involved parent— There is no substitute for being an active, involved parent. Keep the lines of communication open with your child. Start early and talk often. This is not a subject to leave for the school or your kids' friends to handle.

Know who your kids' friends are, where they are and what they're doing.

—This column is brought to you by Covenant House, a national leader in the care of homeless and runaway youth. Covenant House, the country's largest shelter for homeless kids, offers a second chance to thousands of youth annually. For more, go to covenanthouse.ca.



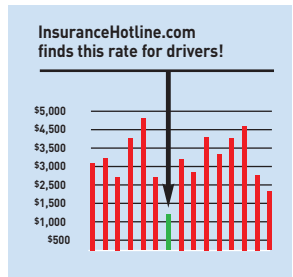
Lee Romanov, President

Most drivers, right now, are paying \$100's, even \$1,000's of dollars more than necessary for their car insurance. A number of drivers believe if they're paying more, they're getting more. They're not.

All insurance companies sell the exact same insurance policy, word for word. It's like buying a can of pop at the variety store for \$1 or paying \$4 for it at a sports event. Same pop, different price. Same insurance policy, different price.

Look at this rate comparison published by the government of Ontario. There are \$1,000's of dollars difference between what insurance companies charge for the same policy. Same policy, different prices.

The government posts these charts as warnings. They are telling you that if you don't shop and compare you are in danger of grossly overpaying.



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Comparing Is Fun It's Also Profitable

There's over a \$10,000 spread in car insurance rates for this car. You can bet I didn't pick the company that cost the most.

I went to InsuranceHotline.com and found the insurance company that had the best rate for me.

Chart Source: Government of Ontario, www.fscg.gov.on.ca. These 416 different rates are based on only one profile of a married couple. A 40 year old male driving a Dodge Ram, and a 39 year old female, driving a Dodge Neon. Neither driver has any tickets or accidents.

Companies	(K1Y)	(K3V)	(L3V)	(M4Y)	(N6A)	(N6W)	(P3E)	(P7K)
AAA Insurance	2714	2547	4390	5528	3616	3896	2915	2810
AAA Pacific	2714	2544	4390	5528	3615	3897	2914	2811
Alidate Insurance	3141	2625	4847	3603	3199	3011	3015	2843
American Home Assurance	2528	2348	3719	3997	3019	3048	2402	2483
Anva Insurance	2923	2472	5106	4420	3685	4145	2895	2942
Bear Insurance Company	3203	3051	5494	5101	3982	4819	3446	3424
CAA Insurance Company	2295	2237	3431	4472	3002	3489	2559	2611
COSECO Insurance	2395	2143	2647	4306	2648	2972	1918	1844
CUMIS General Insurance	2080	2026	2696	3660	2406	2750	2419	2385
Certain Direct Insurance	2246	2195	3243	3029	2714	2718	2328	2328
Chubb Insurance Company	2812	2695	3492	3345	2385	2001	3346	3270
Co-operators General	2270	1870	3854	3125	2637	2920	2521	2544
Coachman Insurance	2131	1780	2994	2886	2463	2744	2187	2004
Domion of Canada	2040	2001	3143	2747	2964	2830	2319	2088
Echelon General Insurance	4078	4810	8393	10639	6774	8245	4606	4807
Economical Mutual	1953	1783	2751	2703	2116	2347	1973	1994
Elite Insurance Company	2449	2544	4504	3906	3268	3500	2914	2945
Farmers' Mutual Insurance	3244	2761	3893	4728	3376	4238	3511	3571
Federated Insurance	3394	2648	4218	5050	3201	4033	3798	3703
Federation Insurance	1953	1783	2751	2703	2116	2347	1973	1994
Gore Mutual Insurance	2484	2040	3297	4547	2888	3023	2590	2667
Guarantee Company	2638	2342	4001	4308	3352	3172	2677	2749
ING Insurance Company	3005	2608	4088	3839	3453	3299	3009	2627
Kingsway General Insurance	4998	4094	4447	7838	5498	6449	4675	4722
Lloyd's	3147	3074	4914	5017	3282	3732	3451	3012
Lombard Insurance	2293	2216	3446	3732	2491	3129	2592	2443
Motors Insurance	2511	2123	3538	3880	2858	3108	2649	2622
Nordic Insurance	2149	2022	3548	3282	2604	3139	2394	2415
Optimum Insurance	2947	2485	3513	5352	3831	3483	3214	2992
Pacific Insurance	2911	3207	4826	5202	4169	4081	3477	3411
Pembroke Insurance	2400	2179	3045	3659	3118	2956	2258	2180
Personal Insurance Company	1891	1356	2006	1808	1457	1434	1416	1416
Perth Insurance Company	3030	3433	5476	5257	4201	4587	3923	3140
Pilot Insurance Company	2917	2842	4801	4448	3484	4123	3035	3222
Portage La Prairie Mutual In	2920	2263	3997	4564	2956	3505	3345	2948
Premium Insurance Company	2511	2442	3410	4317	2883	3209	2942	3037
RBC General Insurance	1813	1926	3141	2487	2332	2173	2516	2165
Royal & Sun Alliance	2140	2162	2547	3628	2818	2908	1981	2595
S & F Insurance Company	2517	2405	4295	2897	3086	3391	2752	2725
Scottish & York Insurance	2451	2527	4448	3848	3241	3444	2894	2936
Security National Insurance	3312	2981	4157	5119	3454	4485	3811	3974
State Farm Mutual	2427	2343	4021	3775	3104	3327	3052	2915
TD General Insurance	2596	2451	3721	3807	2801	3279	2909	2904
TD Home and Auto Insurance	2878	2781	3834	5199	2913	4189	3296	3904
Traders General Insurance	2441	2320	4252	3880	3312	3424	2844	2900
Trafalgar Insurance Company	2594	2147	3450	3369	2887	3290	2426	2355
United Assurance Company	1763	1792	2448	3192	2028	2189	2000	2184
Waterloo Insurance Company	1992	1816	2742	2735	2140	2509	1993	1767
Wawanesa Mutual Insurance	2855	2730	4211	4600	3447	3529	3370	2874
Western Assurance Company	2446	2019	3659	2942	2452	2915	2441	2223
York Fire & Casualty	2557	2129	3449	3983	3058	3029	2778	2827
Zentil Insurance Company	4972	4871	6740	7302	5472	6311	5670	5320

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