

Crystal, Poppers & Boner-Uppers



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2mix

or not

2mix

NEON // Options for gay and bisexual men who use crystal.

WARNING



Taking a pill to keep your boner up while on crystal? Have poppers become your “pick-me-up” during weekend sex? Some gay/bi men are mixing crystal, poppers, and any one of the popular boner-uppers like: VIAGRA, CIALIS or LEVITRA. Mixing these drugs can cause serious health problems. To keep your party from ending in the emergency room or worse, here are some things you need to know about mixing these drugs into your sex play.



AVOIDING THE EMERGENCY ROOM

Mixing crystal, poppers and VIAGRA, CIALIS or LEVITRA can have very serious health risks. The danger lies in how these drugs affect your heart rate and blood pressure. Using two drugs together that both lower your blood pressure can cause fainting, unconsciousness, coma, or even death. Using two drugs that speed up your heart can send your blood pressure zooming towards heart attack or stroke. Strenuous all-night dancing, intense sex, dehydration, and lack of sleep could make the problem worse. So can alcohol, ecstasy, GHB, or Special K.



Crystal

Crystal is a stimulant that sends your body into overdrive. To handle this, crystal shrinks your veins, speeds up your heart rate, and increases blood pressure. It also floods your brain with chemicals that give you lots of energy. You may feel euphoric, confident or even paranoid. Crystal can boost sex drive, delay orgasm and heighten your sense of pleasure.

The downsides are not so pretty. The chemicals in crystal are highly toxic. Even after a few uses, crystal can cause depression, sexual dysfunction, heart problems, psychosis, and long-term brain damage. It can also be very addictive. Some men get hooked quickly and soon need crystal to have sex or just get through a normal day. Some signs of addiction may include:

- **Feeling “out of control”**
- **Health, money or relationship problems**
- **Getting high even when you don’t want to**
- **Feeling like it “isn’t fun anymore”**

If you use crystal . . .

- **Eat, drink plenty of water, and get some sleep. That's the first rule of safer speed use.**
- **Take frequent breaks from using. Don't get high every weekend or stay up past one or two days.**
- **If you inject, never share needles or any of your works. Always use new, clean equipment.**
- **Watch for signs of addiction or problem use. Don't wait to get help.**



BONER-UPPERS

(VIAGRA, CIALIS, & LEVITRA)

Boner-uppers are used to treat impotence (the inability to get or keep a hard-on) that often occurs as men age. Boner-uppers open your blood vessels to let more blood flow into your penis. As a result, your blood pressure drops and your heart-rate increases. This can cause dizziness, headaches, facial flushing or blue tinted vision. Take too many boner-uppers and you might feel breathless, have chest pains, or black out. You might also get an erection that won't go down (called "priapism"). This can be painful and cause long-term damage to penile tissue.

Never use boner-uppers with poppers. Together, these drugs can have a fatal effect on blood pressure and heart rate. Several deaths related to the overuse of boner-uppers have already occurred. Boner-uppers are not believed to increase sex drive or make people horny. Boner-uppers need some sexual stimulation to really work, so you won't get an instant hard-on. Getting turned-on is up to you and your partner(s). If you get aroused and hard on your own, then boner-uppers aren't needed or worth the extra risk.

Boner-uppers don't work the same for all men. Your results will depend on how much you take, what other drugs are in your system, your current health status and even where you take it. If you pop a pill at the bathhouse, you just might get an erection. But is that due to the boner-upper or the naked buffet in front of you?

If you believe you need boner-uppers ...

- Get a prescription from your doctor; you should never use other peoples' meds. Limit your dose to what your doctor recommends. This will help you avoid risky side effects.
- Give it time to work. Boner-uppers take about an hour to reach full effect.
- Absolutely avoid poppers. This combination is very dangerous and can be fatal. Don't use boner-uppers and poppers together or within 24 hours of each other.

“I've used crystal for a year and can't get hard anymore. Why?”

“Crystal dick” is common among crystal users. It's most likely the result of vein damage and changes in brain chemicals that cause an erection. Sometimes, these changes can become permanent. Will boner-uppers help? Reports from crystal users vary. Sometimes taking a break from crystal does the trick. Over time, many men see their erections improve once they stop crystal for a while. Before you start popping little wonder pills, talk to your doctor first!



Poppers

Poppers are a liquid form of amyl or butyl nitrite. Some guys inhale the fumes during sex to enhance orgasm, prolong sex, or relax their ass muscles for easier penetration or fisting. After a quick rush, you may feel light headed, nauseous, or flushed. Expect a slamming headache in the morning! Poppers are not physically addictive, but you can develop a tolerance. After frequent use, some guys can't have or enjoy sex without them.

Poppers open your blood vessels and can dramatically lower your blood pressure. If you use too much, your blood pressure can drop too low. You could feel faint or pass out. Poppers also put extra strain on your heart. Going overboard on poppers can increase your chance of heart attack. The chances are even higher when you add dancing, crystal, cocaine, boner-uppers, or intense sex.

If you use poppers . . .

- Leave some time between whiffs.
Let yourself recover before taking another hit.
- Don't let the liquid touch your nose, mouth, or skin and don't swallow it. Poppers are harsh chemicals that burn!
- Don't confuse a bottle of poppers with GHB.
GHB comes in little bottles like poppers but should not have a smell.

*"Compared to crystal, poppers seem like candy.
So what's the big deal?"*

Poppers may seem mild compared to other "harder" drugs, but they are not harmless. Poppers can cause skin disorders, rashes, and tissue damage in your nose. Poppers can block your blood's ability to carry oxygen which can lead to death. Poppers can also cause brain damage, but how much isn't clear. And the more you use, the worse the damage can get. Research has shown that poppers weaken parts of your immune system and may actually promote the growth of Kaposi's Sarcoma tumors. And guys who use poppers have a higher risk of contracting HIV.



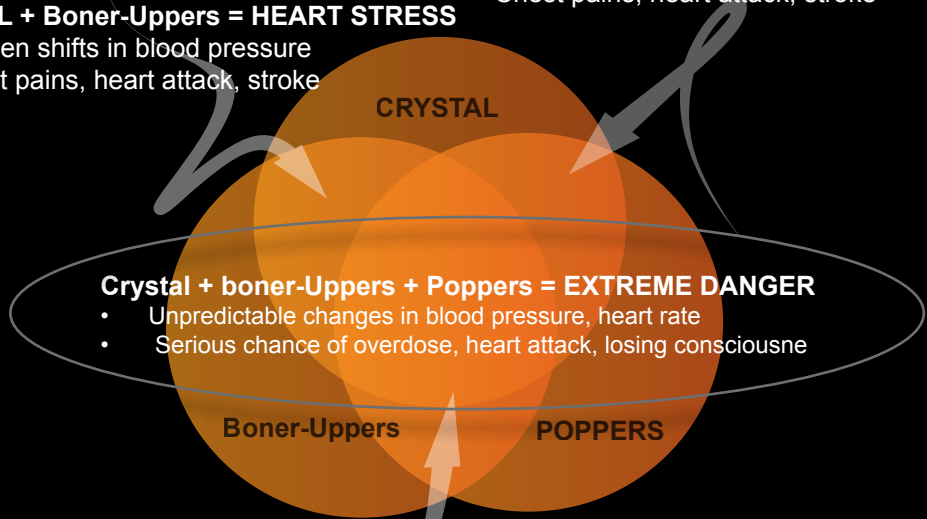
DON'T MIX CRYSTAL, BONER-UPPERS, AND POPPERS!!!

POPPERS + CRYSTAL = HEART STRESS

- Sudden shifts in blood pressure
- Chest pains, heart attack, stroke

CRYSTAL + Boner-Uppers = HEART STRESS

- Sudden shifts in blood pressure
- Chest pains, heart attack, stroke



Crystal + boner-Uppers + Poppers = EXTREME DANGER

- Unpredictable changes in blood pressure, heart rate
- Serious chance of overdose, heart attack, losing consciousness

Boner-Uppers+ POPPERS = BLOOD PRESSURE DROP

- Hard to breathe, possible black-outs, coma, or death
- DO NOT MIX with alcohol or GHB

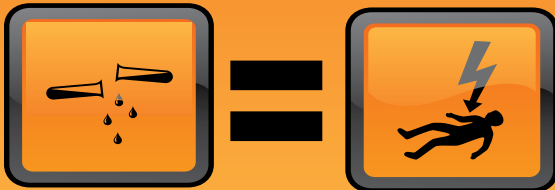
"But I love all three!! I don't want to quit any of them! What can I do?"

You don't have to quit any of them - just don't use them together! That's your safest choice. If you do choose to mix, then at least cut back on one drug. This isn't the best option, but it might lessen your risks.

Cutting back can mean using less of a drug or using it less often. One may be easier for you than the other. So, how do you decide?

In general, you have the most control over the drug you do first. Your judgment is usually better at the beginning. Once you start adding drugs your choices may not be the best. Use less of your first drug.

But what if your first drug is the one you love the most and can't cut down? Then ask, Which drug can I say "no" to most easily? For example, if you can't resist crystal, then skip or do less poppers.



A square icon with a double border, containing the text "HIV+" in bold black letters on an orange background.

HIV+

HIV POSITIVE? THERE'S MORE!

- **Some men with HIV turn to crystal, boner-uppers and poppers to spice up sex lives sometimes dampened by low testosterone levels, medications, depression, infections and simply getting older. But many of these problems can be helped by a good doctor. For example, if your testosterone is low, testosterone is the solution - not boner-uppers. If you're depressed, maybe you need a counselor or an antidepressant, not crystal.**
- **Crystal, poppers, and some HIV meds get broken down in the same liver pathway. Since only one drug can enter at a time, the other drugs get backed up. The HIV meds reach this pathway first, so crystal and boner-uppers can build up, sometimes to dangerous levels. Your heart may not be able to handle the extra stress of so much crystal or boner-uppers in your system.**
- **The following HIV medications increase the levels of both crystal and boner-uppers:**
 - *protease inhibitors (especially ritonavir)*
 - *Delaviridine*
 - *itraconazole, ketaconazole (anti-fungals)*
 - *erythromycin, clarithromycin, azithromycin (antibiotics)*

It is now known that crystal use can cause nerve damage and lead to early onset of HIV dementia. As far as we know, neither boner-uppers nor crystal seems to affect the way anti-retroviral meds work. However, people who use hard-core drugs like crystal and cocaine often forget to take their meds and forgetting to take your meds while you're high can cause drug resistance and increase viral load.

1. Always take your HIV meds as prescribed. Taking "drug holidays" to get high could impact your viral load. Over time, your cocktails could lose their effect.
2. Be alert to any changes in your high after you start a new HIV medication. Do you feel "higher," stay up longer, have more paranoia or a harder crash? These could signal drug interactions. Tell your doctor.
3. Use less crystal. Try one-third or even one-half your normal amount. If you just can't stop at one hit or say "no" to that extra bump, talk to your doctor about options.
4. Take less boner-uppers. If you take protease inhibitors, the makers of VIAGRA suggest using only 25mg (half the standard 50mg dose) within 48 hours. Makers of CIALIS and LEVITRA suggest using only 10mg. For all, start low and see what results you get.
5. Don't follow advice from well-meaning friends. Their experience and their HIV are not yours. Talk with your doctor.

"My doctor always lectures me about my crystal use, so I don't talk about it anymore.

I'd rather avoid the subject than listen to that every time."

A lot of men who use drugs feel judged and intimidated by their doctors. But your doctor does need to know about your drug use: both medical and recreational. Otherwise, he or she could prescribe a medication or dose that doesn't mix well with crystal. If your doctor won't talk respectfully and openly about your drug use, tell him or her how you feel. If talking it through doesn't work - get a new doctor!

Can crystal or poppers make it easier to get HIV? In many ways, the answer is YES. Here's why:

- **When you're high you may lose good judgment. You may intend to be safe, but in the heat of the moment, condoms might never cross your mind.**
- **Poppers open blood vessels, sending more blood to areas like your dick and ass. This makes it easier for HIV and other STD's to get into your bloodstream.**
- **Crystal, alcohol, or all-night dancing and sex can dehydrate you and dry up the natural lubricant in your ass. A dry, cracked ass is a welcome mat for viruses and germs.**
- **Poppers and crystal can each reduce the pain of anal sex. But long, hard ass sex beyond your normal limits can create small tears and more openings for HIV.**
- **Guys who use crystal or poppers tend to have more sex with more partners.**

And it's not just about HIV. There are plenty of other sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes, and hepatitis B that are just waiting to find you. Having another STD can make it easier to get or pass on HIV.

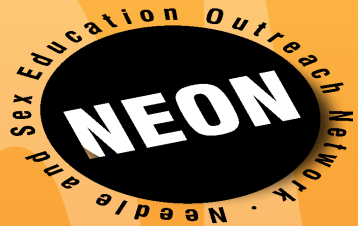
So what's a crystal user to do?

Prepare for safety BEFORE you get high or get into sex. Before any dick goes into any ass, get the condoms out. Talk about what is OK and not OK. Also, be more consistent with your safety plan when you're NOT high. For many guys, the safer they are straight edge, the safer they are when high. It just becomes a natural part of their sexual practice.

Here are some other tips for safer drug and sex play:

- **Don't buy into "the drugs made me do it" excuse. Plenty of guys use speed and other sex drugs and still use condoms or negotiate safety. You can too.**
- **Plan ahead BEFORE you get high! If you think you might have sex later, take condoms and lube. Keep them with your drugs, wallet, or keys.**
- **Lube, lube, more lube - and always water-based lube!**
- **Condoms and lube may wear out before you do. Check them often during sex, when you change position, or withdraw.**

Still have questions about safer crystal or other drug use? Project NEON provides reliable, peer-based information and services to gay and bisexual crystal users. Our staff and peer educators can answer questions about crystal, party drugs, and safer sex or needle use. If you need help with life problems, managing your use or feel you want to quit, our speed-savvy counselors can also help. You don't have to quit or even want to quit to get help.



**Needle and Sex Education Outreach Network (NEON),
is a program of Seattle Counseling Service.**

NEON's goals are to:

- Raise awareness about the links between crystal use and transmission of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- Provide accurate and truthful information about how crystal affects the body and mind, provide options for reducing sexual and drug using risks associated with crystal and provide free help to better manage or stop crystal use.

NEON provides needle exchange * peer education * health information * referrals * one-on-one counseling * advocacy. We also sponsor several groups for men who want to manage, cut down, or quit crystal altogether. Counseling and groups are provided at Seattle Counseling Service. All NEON services are FREE. We are NOT a 12-step program.

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