
Illicit drug smoke houses

An illicit drug smoke house is a property that has internal surfaces contaminated with residues from smoking illicit drugs.

The most common residue is from smoking methylamphetamine (meth, crystal meth or ice), but other residues can include cocaine, heroin and THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) from cannabis. According to the [Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission Illicit Drug Data Report 2016-17 \(external site\)](#) it is estimated that WA has the highest meth use of all States and Territories in Australia.

Illicit drug residues are not visible and often there is no chemical odour or smell.

The residues will continue to be a health risk unless the property is properly cleaned.

What is the health risk from contamination?

A person living in a contaminated house can be exposed to residues by touching or swallowing them, and also by breathing them in if they become airborne.

However, residues deposited from smoking are not likely to pose nearly as high a risk as those resulting from [drug manufacture \(clandestine drug laboratories\)](#).

The level of risk largely depends on the amount of contamination and the susceptibility of those living in the house. Children are of most concern. The potential health risks associated with meth contamination are better known than for other illicit drug residues.

The smoke contamination level is likely to vary depending on usage. The levels may be low if there has been infrequent smoking of the drug. Alternatively the levels may be higher if there has been prolonged and, heavy smoking, or if there have been multiple users.

Visitors to the home are less likely to be affected due to their short time there.

How do you remove contamination?

It is important to know where to find the right information about how to clean between tenancies, where there is evidence of drug use. To assist you with this process, refer to the [Illegal Drug Activity in Homes: Managing Risk – Guide for tenants, landlords, property managers and agents \(PDF 249KB\)](#).

A contaminated property normally needs to be cleaned by an industrial/commercial cleaning contractor. The Department of Health (DoH) recommends using a contractor that has been endorsed by DoH. Refer to the [DoH accredited service providers list \(external site\)](#).

In most instances illicit drug residue remediation will include as a minimum several washes with an alkaline detergent. The cleaning process should use the DoH recommended procedure. Refer to the [Interim guide for remediation of low-level illicit drug contamination \(PDF 284KB\)](#), which also includes a cleaner compliance statement. In most cases, soft furnishings and carpets can be cleaned through laundering or steam cleaning as part of the contracted cleaning process.

Landlords, property agents and managers are responsible for ensuring a property is safe for future tenants, and are advised to adopt a thorough cleaning process between tenancies, based on the DoH low-level contamination clean-up procedure.

More information

Your local Government council or shire Environmental Health Officer may be able to assist you with information about the management of illicit drug residue in properties in relation to their jurisdiction

More information on illicit drug residues in the home can be found in the [Illicit drug contamination in homes – What do you need to know? fact sheet \(PDF 60KB\)](#), or by contacting the Environmental Health Directorate on 9222 2000 or on ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au

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See also

- > [Illicit drug activities and residues in homes](#)
- > [Clandestine drug laboratories - are you at risk?](#)