

Fast Facts on Cocaine / Crack

- Cocaine, also known as “coke”, “snow”, “blow” and many other street names, is a powerful and potentially addictive central nervous system stimulant.
- It comes from the leaves of the coca bush.
- Cocaine is an odourless, white crystal powder.
- Crack is a rock like form of cocaine made from a solution of cocaine powder and baking soda.
- Cocaine can be smoked, snorted or injected. When snorted or injected effects typically last 30-40 minutes. When smoked the effects last approximately 10-15 minutes. Smoking it causes the most intense and addictive high.
- Possessing, producing and trafficking in cocaine/crack can result in fines, prison sentences and a criminal record.

Short-term effects may include:

- ✿ Dilated pupils, dry mouth, stuffy nose;
- ✿ Decreased appetite and reduced need to sleep;
- ✿ Feelings of euphoria, confidence and power;
- ✿ Increased energy, alertness and over-activity;
- ✿ Increased heart rate, breathing rate and blood pressure;
- ✿ Large doses can produce severe agitation, anxiety, erratic behaviour, hallucinations, blurred vision, headaches, muscle spasms and nausea.

Long-term effects may include:

- ✿ Chapped skin under the nose, internal damage to the nose (if snorted);
- ✿ Headaches;
- ✿ Minimal ability to experience pleasure without the drug;
- ✿ Weakened immune system;
- ✿ Seizures, heart problems or stroke;
- ✿ Mood swings, depression, paranoia and hallucinations;
- ✿ Tolerance and dependency can develop;
- ✿ Sleeping, eating and sexual problems;
- ✿ Repeated use may cause long lasting problems with memory, attention and behaviour.

Other Dangers:

- Cocaine is a highly addictive drug. Withdrawal symptoms may include excessive sleep, depression, hunger, anxiety, irritability and intense cravings. Withdrawal from cocaine is often referred to as a "crash".
- Single high doses of cocaine have been known to result in death due to stroke, cardiac arrest or respiratory failure. Seizures can also be caused by high doses.
- Cocaine is dangerous in combination with any drug that increases blood pressure, affects heart rhythms or has any stimulant effects.
- Cocaine use during pregnancy increases risk of miscarriage or premature birth. Prenatal exposure to cocaine often causes low birth weights and can result in stroke and brain damage to the fetus prior to birth. These babies can be irritable and experience sleeping and feeding problems.
- Cocaine purchased on the street is rarely pure. It is often diluted with other white powdery substances, some of which may be poisonous. This makes it difficult to know the strength of the drug therefore increasing the risk of overdose.

Produced by: *AFM Youth Unit, 2003*

Sources: *AADAC Drugs Fact Sheets (website); Mind over Matter – Methamphetamine Series, National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes on Health (website); Cocaine/Crack Fact Sheet created by AFM Youth Unit.*