

Cocaine comes in a number of forms including, powder, freebase and crack. Cocaine is a powerful but short-term 'stimulant'.

Cocaine

A.K.A: charlie, snow, coke, C, rocks, stones, base, freebase, crack, white dust, white lady, toot

Cocaine 'speeds up' the brain, which helps you stay alert and awake, and sometimes provides an 'energy burst'. It is also a pain reliever. It is illegal to possess or use cocaine in Australia. If you are caught with even a small amount you can be arrested and it could lead to a criminal record.

How is cocaine taken?

Cocaine can be smoked, rubbed onto the gums, snorted, injected, or added to food and drink, depending on the form. Cocaine powder is white and is usually snorted. 'Crack' is cocaine made into small 'rocks' and usually smoked in a pipe, foil or bottle. Cocaine powder and crack can be mixed into a liquid for injecting.

What are the immediate effects of cocaine?

Straight after using cocaine people usually feel wide awake, do not want to sleep, and feel more confident.

Effects that aren't so good can include:

- Paranoia
- Higher body temperature
- Faster heart rate
- Reduced appetite
- Dry mouth
- Anxiety
- Unpredictable and sometimes violent behaviour
- Not caring about pain, even though it might be a sign that something is wrong
- Increased chance of taking risks

The immediate effects of cocaine and crack don't last very long. They usually peak in 2–5 minutes and last from 10 minutes up to a couple of hours. You can't always tell how long the effects will last, because you never know the strength of street cocaine.

How can cocaine affect my mental health?

Mental health problems that can result from cocaine use include:

- Depression
- Anxiety, paranoia and panic attacks
- Cocaine psychosis, with symptoms such as delusions, hallucinations, and aggressive behaviour

How can cocaine affect my physical health?

All forms of cocaine are highly addictive.

Continued use of cocaine can cause a number of problems, including:

- Feeling as though you have the flu the day after using it
- Feeling run down
- Lower sex drive
- Difficulties with sleep
- Sensitivity to sound and light
- Scarring, abscesses and vein damage from injecting
- Blood-borne viruses like hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV (the AIDS virus) from sharing needles
- Breathing problems and lung damage from smoking
- Damage to the nose from snorting
- Loss of brain cells
- Harm to unborn babies

Apart from these health problems, using cocaine can lead to criminal behaviour, financial problems, and social problems like falling out with your friends and family.

What about overdose?

Larger doses of cocaine can cause:

- Tremors and muscle twitches
- Nausea and vomiting
- A fast but weak heart beat, changes in the heart rhythm and heart attack
- High temperature
- Seizures
- Stroke leading to coma and death

You should get help fast if you think anyone has had a cocaine overdose. Call an ambulance (phone 000) and stay with the person. If they are unconscious, turn them onto their side and ensure their airway is not blocked.

What about withdrawal?

Because cocaine is very addictive, you can experience withdrawal symptoms when you try to stop or reduce cocaine use. Symptoms of withdrawal include craving cocaine, agitation, hunger, difficulty sleeping and exhaustion. People often feel anxious and are extremely irritable during withdrawal. Other symptoms can include feeling depressed and 'rough', which worsens the craving.

Managing your drug use

If you, your family or your friends think your drug use is becoming a problem, then get some help and talk to people about it. Changing your drug use can be hard work, but it will be worth it. Some people can reduce or stop drug use on their own, but think about talking to a trusted family member, friend, doctor or counsellor.

For more information, and to find out how to get help, visit the **headspace** website: www.headspace.org.au