



COCAINE FACT SHEET

What is cocaine?

Cocaine is made from the leaves of the coca plant, which grows in South America. When processed, cocaine is made into a white powder.

Crack is a form of cocaine. It is processed into small hard “rocks” that can be smoked.

How do people use cocaine?

Cocaine powder is usually inhaled through the nose (“snorted”). Sometimes it is mixed with liquid and injected into the bloodstream.

How does cocaine work?

Cocaine is a stimulant. It speeds up the central nervous system, producing a feeling of euphoria and power. Cocaine acts quickly. When snorted, it produces a high almost immediately.

Is cocaine addictive?

Cocaine is extremely addictive. People can come to crave it after only a few uses, because it produces intense feelings of self-confidence, power, and exhilaration. This high lasts about thirty minutes, but it is quickly followed by a depression known as a crash. The user then craves more cocaine to counteract the crash.

As use continues, the user needs more and more cocaine to feel high, but the more cocaine the user takes, the worse the crash becomes. In this way, users get caught on a rollercoaster mood cycle. To break this cycle requires professional help.

How does cocaine harm the body?

Snorting cocaine irritates nasal passages. This can cause a sort of permanent cold. Prolonged use can erode the cartilage between the nostrils, leaving a hole or causing the nose to collapse.

Cocaine makes blood vessels constrict, reducing oxygen supply to the heart, lungs, brain, and other organs. This oxygen reduction can cause rapid pulse, irregular heartbeat and high blood pressure. Users have died from cocaine-induced heart attacks and strokes. This can happen on the first use or the hundredth use. There is no way to tell how the drug will affect a user on any one occasion.

What are the psychological effects of cocaine use?

With continuing cocaine use, the highs are not as intense and the lows become worse. Users can become anxious, depressed and irritable.

Cocaine users can undergo personality changes and lose their grip on reality. Paranoia—the conviction that people are against them—is common among heavy users. So is violence. Child abuse and spouse abuse have been linked with cocaine. As a user grows dependent on cocaine, the drug becomes more important than family, friends and work. Every aspect of the user’s life is adversely affected, and those close to the user suffer.

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT COCAINE

1. Cocaine impairs a user’s ability to think, perceive and react. It is never safe to drive while high on cocaine.
2. Cocaine is never sold in its pure form. It is mixed with additives like amphetamines (speed) and anesthetics.
3. Often, cocaine abusers use depressants, like alcohol and heroin, to soften the crash. This has dangerous physical effects, and can lead to polydrug addiction.
4. Cocaine is an illegal drug. It is against the law to buy, sell, or possess it.
5. Violence is common in the illegal drug trade. Cocaine users may be subjected to force and violence by dealers and others.