

THE FACTS

Cocaine

Coke, Snow, Charlie

What is Cocaine?

Cocaine is a white powder derived from the Coca plant, which mainly grows in South America. It can be a powerful and extremely addictive stimulant, which means it speeds up the body and mind for short amounts of time.

What does cocaine look like?

Cocaine is a white powder. Crack cocaine looks like small lumps or rocks.

How do people take Cocaine?

Cocaine is generally sold as a white powder that people sniff. Some people inject cocaine to get a more intense hit, but this can be much more dangerous. Crack is a smokeable form of cocaine which can be especially addictive.

What are the effects?

Cocaine may make people feel more confident, excited and energetic. Physically, it can increase the heart rate and body temperature and may cause a loss of appetite. The effects of powder cocaine can last for up to an hour followed by a comedown.

The way cocaine affects the chemicals in the brain may make people feel more alert and in control. This means that cocaine is often thought of as a sociable drug.

What are the risks?

There are several risks associated with using cocaine. Stimulant drugs like cocaine can make the heart work harder than normal to keep the body up with what the brain wants it to do. This may cause a stroke or heart attack. These risks can increase when cocaine is mixed with alcohol.

Cocaine can also cause your body temperature to rise, potentially resulting in fits. This is more likely to happen in hot environments like nightclubs.

People using cocaine may suffer from feelings of depression, anxiety, paranoia and it may trigger existing mental health problems. A cocaine comedown may leave people feeling drained, depressed and even suicidal.

Sniffing cocaine can cause damage to the nose. People using cocaine in this way may get problems such as ulcers, nosebleeds and damage to cartilage that separates the nostrils in the nose.

Injecting cocaine can damage veins resulting in ulcers and gangrene (where body tissues die). There may be a significant risk of getting HIV and Hepatitis infections if you share needles or injecting equipment with others.

It is also difficult to know what exactly is in cocaine as it can be mixed with many other unknown substances, which can potentially be harmful.

Is it addictive?

Cocaine can be highly addictive and it can be difficult to resist giving in to powerful cravings. The low mood levels that people also experience after taking cocaine increases the desire to take more.

What is the law?

Cocaine is an illegal Class A drug. If you're caught by the police with cocaine on you, you might get a warning, a reprimand, a formal caution, a fixed penalty (fine), or you could even be arrested and prosecuted. The maximum penalty for possession of a Class A drug is 7 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. The maximum penalty for supplying is life in prison and/or an unlimited fine.

Don't forget that, as with drinking alcohol, it is illegal to take drugs and drive. You could lose your licence, be fined or even go to prison if you are caught driving while under the influence.

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