



connect

wellbeing, ability, recovery

COCAINE

Information, guidance and advice

What is cocaine?

Powder cocaine (also called coke), freebase and crack are all forms of cocaine. They are all powerful stimulants, with short-lived effects – which mean that they temporarily speed up the way your mind and body work, but the effects are short-lived. Both ‘freebase’ cocaine (powder cocaine that has been prepared for smoking) and ‘crack’ cocaine (a ‘rock’ like form of cocaine) can be smoked. This means that they reach the brain very quickly, while snorted powder cocaine gets to the brain more slowly. All types of cocaine are addictive, but by reaching the brain very quickly freebase or crack tend to have a much stronger effect and be more addictive than snorted powder cocaine. Injecting any form of cocaine will also reach the brain more quickly but this has serious additional risks, including damaging veins and spreading blood borne viruses, such as HIV and Hep C.

Can you get addicted to cocaine?

Cocaine is very addictive and it can be difficult to resist the craving for more. This powerful craving can develop because cocaine can change the way your brain works. Although the powerful psychological dependence that can easily develop is more of a problem than the physical withdrawal symptoms, people who stop using can experience low moods and feel very rough, and this can also tempt them to take more cocaine.

Cocaine has many serious risks

- Cocaine users have died from overdoses
- High doses can raise the body’s temperature, cause convulsions and heart failure. Risk of overdosing increases if cocaine is mixed with other drugs or alcohol.
- Over time, snorting cocaine will seriously damage the cartilage in your nose that separates the nostrils; and it is not unknown for heavy users to lose their cartilage and end up with just one really big nostril and a mis-shapen nose.
- Cocaine use is very risky for anybody with high blood pressure or a heart condition. Even perfectly healthy, young people can have a fit or heart attack after taking too much.
- Using cocaine a lot makes people feel depressed and run down. It can lead to serious problems with anxiety, paranoia and panic attacks.
- Cocaine can bring previous mental health problems to the surface. If a family member has had mental health problems, there might be an increased risk for you.
- Taking it when you are pregnant can damage your baby. It may cause miscarriage, premature labour and low birth weight.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF



- Regularly smoking crack can cause breathing problems and pains in the chest.
- Frequent users find they begin to crave more – so it can become an expensive habit to keep.
- Injecting drugs can damage veins and cause ulcers and gangrene. Sharing needles or other injecting equipment can spread HIV and hepatitis infections.
- It's easier to overdose if you're injecting cocaine.
- Heavy crack users may take heroin to try to dull their cravings, so they may get hooked on heroin as well.
- 'Speedballing', injecting a mixture of cocaine and heroin, can have fatal results.

Cocaine and alcohol

Using cocaine with alcohol (or other drugs) can substantially increase risk of side-effects. Alcohol and cocaine together can be particularly dangerous, as they mix together in the body to produce a toxic chemical, called cocaethylene.

Every Story has two sides...

Cocaine addiction has cost me my home, my car and my job.

I've tried to quit many times, but too much is going on and I'm not strong enough to stop.

I felt this incredible high and feeling of wellbeing, like my life had suddenly been changed forever... I've chased that feeling ever since.

I was a hard working family man, I ended up in prison, lost my freedom, my friends and family.

I used to be a pretty girl, cocaine has taken away my looks, my confidence and my life.

Over the last 12 months we must have saved an absolute fortune.

Seeking help was the best decision of my life. I had to understand that I had to change many things in my life if I really wanted to stop.

I had to remember the real highs in life, having fun with friends, spending time with my family, playing sport and generally doing fun things with those closest to me.

I have received great support to overcome my addiction and there are some great services out there willing to help and support you.

I have got my life back, my children and my family. Life is great!



Withdrawal

If you have been using cocaine for a while, whether as a regular pattern, in binges, or if you have become dependent, you may want to know what to expect if you stop taking cocaine and go into cocaine withdrawal.

If you have become addicted to cocaine, you are likely to experience some withdrawal symptoms when you quit, but withdrawal can also happen after heavy use. The initial “crash” of cocaine withdrawal can vary in time and intensity, and can last from hours to days. Although in experimental conditions, cocaine withdrawal resolves within 24 hours, some users experience weeks or months of withdrawal symptoms, known as post acute withdrawal syndrome (PAWS).

Tips for coping with withdrawal cravings

Keep it at the forefront of your mind that cravings do not last forever. They come in waves – first they build up, then they reach a peak, then they subside.

- Ride out the wave rather than giving in to the craving – it will pass.
- Keeping busy to distract yourself from the cravings can be helpful on focusing your attention away from the desire to take more of the drug.
- Exercise is one of the easiest ways of reducing cravings, because it releases endorphins which make you feel better, and it changes your bodily sensations, making it easier to distract your attention away from physical cues to take more drugs or alcohol.
- Avoid behaviours / situations linked to your drug use i.e. clubbing, parties, friends or stress.

Advice and Getting Help

Getting the correct help and support is crucial to the recovery and success of anyone with issues linked to drug and substance misuse. We would advise anyone who is experiencing problems with drugs to seek help and support immediately. Involving your GP is strongly advised as your GP has a wide variety of services available and can also check to see if you require medical assistance as well as therapeutic support. The community and voluntary sector provides excellent services in partnership with statutory care providers.

Below is a range of info and treatment services available:

Talk to Frank - <https://www.talktofrank.com/>
Addiction NI - <http://addictionni.com/>
Drugs and Alcohol NI - <https://www.drugsandalcoholni.info/>





Discover more information on our website:

www.inspireconnect.info