

COCAINE

SLANG TERMS

Coke, 'C', Flake, Snow, Crack, Nose Candy, Toot, Charlie, Dust, Stardust, Rock, White Lady, Crack, Freebase.

WHAT IS COCAINE?

Cocaine is derived from the leaves of the coca plant grown in South America. It is most commonly seen in Australia as white, odourless powder called cocaine hydrochloride. In this form, it is snorted through the nose (snorted) or injected. It can also be injected. Some people rub it into their gums, where it is absorbed into the bloodstream. Others add it to a drink or food. Freebase and crack are usually smoked.

SOME BASIC FACTS

People who sell cocaine often mix or 'cut' the powder with other substances to increase their profits. These substances can have unpleasant or harmful effects.

The effects of cocaine will vary from person to person and depend on:

- How much cocaine is taken.
- The way in which cocaine is taken.
- The person's size, weight & health.
- The person's experience with cocaine over a period of time.
- Whether it is taken on its own or in combination with other drugs.
- Whether the person is alone or with others.

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

Cocaine belongs to a group of drugs known as "stimulants". Stimulants speed up the messages going between the body and the brain. The effects of cocaine can last anywhere from a few minutes to a couple of hours, depending on how the cocaine is taken and the person taking it. When the immediate "rush" of the cocaine has worn off, the person may experience a "crash".

Many people experience the following effects after taking cocaine:

- Exhilaration
- Reduced appetite
- Unpredictable violent/aggressive behaviour
- Panic sexual arousal
- Increased alertness and energy
- Poor judgement & concentration
- Indifference to fatigue and pain
- 'Superman' complex (e.g. a feeling of being indestructible)
- Physiological arousal (increased heart rate & body temperature)

The immediate effects of cocaine intensify when the drug is taken in greater quantities.

People may also experience:

- Tremors
- Muscle twitches
- Nausea and vomiting
- Rapid and weak pulse
- Arrhythmia
- Chest pain
- Heart attack
- Hyperthermia
- Seizures and stroke

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Long-term effects of cocaine use can include:

- Restlessness
- Increased excitability
- Nausea
- Insomnia
- Weight loss
- Psychosis
- Hallucinations
- Paranoia
- Depression

DANGERS OF USE

There is a range of effects relating to the method of using cocaine:

- **Snorting** cocaine can lead to nosebleeds, sinusitis, and tearing of the nasal wall.
- **Smoking** cocaine can cause breathing difficulties, a chronic cough and lung damage and chest pain.
- **Sharing injecting equipment**, such as needles and syringes, increases the risk of contracting HIV and Hepatitis.
- **Long-term injection** of cocaine can result in blockage and inflammation of blood vessels and abscesses.
- If injected into the skin cocaine can cause severe vasoconstriction, which may prevent blood flowing to the tissue, potentially resulting in severe tissue damage.

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OVERDOSE

An overdose of cocaine will vary from person to person. As little as 10mg (about one-tenth of the dose users commonly inhale) has been known to kill individuals, who have a particularly strong reaction to cocaine.

An overdose of cocaine can produce the following effects:

- Faster, irregular heartbeats
- Lung failure
- Heart failure
- Burst blood vessels in the brain
- All these can lead to Coma and Death

Cocaine psychosis may also occur as a result of either a single high dose of cocaine or a period of taking high doses of cocaine. Its symptoms include: hearing voices, delusions, suspicion and fear of persecution.

TOLERANCE AND DEPENDENCE

Tolerance to cocaine develops quickly with continual heavy use. Tolerance means that you need more of the drug to achieve the same effects you had with smaller doses.

Some people can also become dependent on cocaine. This means that the drug becomes central to their thoughts, emotions and activities.

WITHDRAWAL

Withdrawal symptoms occur when a dependent person stops using or cuts down on the drug they use. Cocaine withdrawal generally occurs in three phases: the "crash", the "withdrawal" and the "extinction". Withdrawal symptoms from cocaine can include:

- Deep depression
- Suicidal feelings
- Nausea & vomiting
- Shaking fits
- Fatigue, weakness
- Hunger
- Anhedonia (inability to feel pleasure)
- Irritability
- Muscle pain
- Long but disturbed sleep

THE LAW

Under the laws, which vary from state to state, Cocaine is an illicit Schedule 2 drug. Federal and State/Territory laws deem it an offence to possess, produce, supply and traffic cocaine, crack or freebase. In Queensland, having 2 grams or more of cocaine is considered trafficking of drugs, and can have a penalty of up to 20 years imprisonment. Supplying Schedule 2 drugs over 2 grams in quantity is an offence dealt with by the District Court and carries a penalty of up to 15 years.

REFERENCES

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