



Cocaine or cocaine hydrochloride

Cocaine facts at a glance

The signs and symptoms of using cocaine can include:

- Anxiety
- Increased heart rate
- Aggression
- Dilated pupils
- Chest pain
- Overheating and sweating
- Nose bleeds
- Paranoia
- Lethargy
- Agitation
- Hallucinations
- Reduced appetite
- Muscle twitches
- Tremors
- Nausea and vomiting

The consequences of using cocaine may include:

- Depression
- Nasal and sinus congestion
- Cardiomyopathy – a serious disease in which the heart muscle becomes inflamed
- Cocaine psychosis
- Violent or erratic behaviour
- Eating and sleeping disorders
- Impaired sexual performance
- Ulceration of the mucous membrane of the nose
- Damage to the nasal septum
- Cardiac arrest
- Convulsions
- Kidney failure
- Stroke
- Seizures
- High risk of dependence (addiction), especially if injected
- HIV and hepatitis infections through needle sharing

What is cocaine?

Cocaine, or coke as it is commonly known, is a stimulant and has a similar effect to amphetamines like speed and ice, but produces a more intense effect and shorter 'high' depending upon dosage. Cocaine is a white crystalline powder with a bitter numbing taste.

Cocaine hydrochloride can be further processed to produce cocaine base, which comes in two forms known as freebase and crack. Freebase is also a white powder, while crack generally comes in the form of crystals ranging in colour from white or creamy to transparent with a pink or yellow tinge.

Cocaine is known by a variety of other names, including: coke, Charlie, blow, C, pepsi, nose candy. Crack cocaine is also known as a variety of other names, including: rock, base and sugar block.

Physical effects

Each of the three forms of cocaine produces an intense 'rush', with the purity and the amount of the drug taken determining its intensity. Users feel a sense of euphoria, alertness, arousal, and increased confidence. All three forms suppress appetite.

When using cocaine, the rush experienced is actually the receptors in the brain being flooded with a neuro-chemical called dopamine. Because cocaine is tapping into the brain's 'reward

system', users begin to crave more of it to experience the same pleasure again. This is the reason many users find the drug to be so addictive.

Problems

<p>Short term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased heart rate• Paranoia• Agitation• Dilated pupils• Hallucinations• Tremors• Muscle twitches• Nausea• Vomiting	<p>Long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cocaine psychosis (paranoid delusions, hallucinations, bizarre, aggressive or violent behaviour)• Eating and sleeping disorders• Impaired sexual performance• Ongoing respiratory problems• Convulsions• Kidney failure• Increased risk of experiencing a stroke• Risk of contracting hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV.
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The immediate effects of cocaine intensify when it's taken in larger quantities, and can produce an irregular heartbeat, chest pain, hyperthermia, seizures or stroke.

When you snort cocaine, you can damage your nasal membranes and septum, and in rare cases this can lead to its eventual collapse. Injecting cocaine can cause severe vasoconstriction, a condition that prevents blood flowing to tissue resulting in severe tissue damage.

Some people have cocaine binges, where they take the drug repetitively over several hours or days. The binge is then followed by the 'crash', with the user experiencing feelings of intense depression, lethargy, and hunger. Using cocaine in combination with alcohol can also be dangerous. When the two are mixed the body produces a substance in the blood called cocaethylene, which can be more toxic than cocaine alone.

Mixing drugs causes additional problems. For example, using heroin and cocaine at the same time affects the part of the brain that controls breathing, causing a labouring of the respiratory system and increasing the risk of the user falling into a coma.