

CRACK COCAINE

Street Names

Cocaine: Coke, Charlie, Snow, Flake, Nose Candy, Hits

Crack: Rocks, Wash, Stone, Crank.

Description

Cocaine is commonly available as a white powder. Crack is 'freebased' cocaine made into small crystals.

Routes of Use

The major routes of administration of cocaine are sniffing or snorting, injecting, and smoking (including free-base and crack cocaine).

History

Cocaine is derived from the coca plant leaves and has been used by ancient South American Indian civilisations as a herbal remedy to tiredness. They achieved an effect by chewing on the leaves. In the 19th century cocaine extracts were used as tonics in the western world and even 'Coca-Cola' contained small amounts of cocaine up until 1904. Cocaine has been used medically for pain relief/local anaesthesia.

Effects People Seek

Cocaine is a powerful, yet short acting, strong central nervous system stimulant. The effects are similar to amphetamines- confidence, appetite loss, euphoria and high energy. Crack produces more intense versions of these effects but they last only a short time. It interferes with the re-absorption process of dopamine, a chemical messenger associated with pleasure and movement. Dopamine is released as part of the brain's reward system and is involved in the high that characterizes cocaine consumption. Physical effects of cocaine use include constricted peripheral blood vessels, dilated pupils, and increased temperature, heart rate, and blood pressure. The duration of cocaine's immediate euphoric effects, which include hyper-stimulation, reduced fatigue, and mental clarity, depends on the route of administration.

Other Effects

The come down from both cocaine and crack leads to feelings of tiredness, lethargy, hunger, anxiety and paranoia. Often more of the drug is taken to reduce the effect of this. Come down effects are worse with higher doses and regular use. Regular Snorting of the drug can damage the delicate membranes lining the inside of the nose as well as the septum separating both nostrils. Smoking crack can cause lung problems and injecting has its own set of dangers.

Dependence & Tolerance

Dependence is psychological to the effects produced. It appears more likely to occur if the cocaine is smoked. If this drug is snorted on a persistent regular basis may cause weight loss, sleeplessness and exhaustion. Regular use of this drug is expensive, for most users, this will create a wide range of problems in their life.

The Law

Cocaine is a class A drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971). It is illegal to possess, supply or produce the drug. The maximum sentences that can be imposed by a Crown Court are: Possession, 7 years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine. Supply, Life imprisonment and/or unlimited fine. It is an offence to be in charge of a motor vehicle whilst 'unfit through drugs', sentences include a period of disqualification, fines and, especially after previous convictions, imprisonment.