



headspace
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

Cocaine



Cocaine AKA charlie, snow, coke, C, rocks, base

What is it?

Cocaine is a powerful but short-term 'stimulant' that speeds up the brain. It makes you stay alert and awake, sometimes provides an 'energy burst' and is also a pain reliever. **It is illegal to possess or use cocaine in Australia.** If you are caught with even a small amount you can be arrested and it could lead to a criminal record.

Cocaine comes in a number of forms including powder, crack and freebase (pure form). Depending on the form it can be smoked, rubbed onto the gums, snorted, injected, or added to food and drink.

Cocaine powder is white and is usually snorted. 'Crack' is cocaine made into small 'rocks' and usually smoked in a pipe, foil or bottle. Cocaine powder and crack can be mixed into a liquid for injecting.

There is no "safe way" to use cocaine, however, if you are choosing to use, it is important that you use as safely as possible.



What does it do?

How you react to cocaine depends on the form you are using, how much you've taken, whether you are using it on its own or mixed with something else, your size and the kind of mood you are in.

Often people feel wide awake and experience increased energy and confidence after using cocaine and crack but these feelings don't last very long. They usually peak at 2-5 minutes and last from 10 minutes up to a couple of hours; it all depends on the strength of street cocaine.



Cocaine might give people a 'rush' but it can also cause some pretty unpleasant effects. You might experience paranoia, begin to behave in a way that is unpredictable, risky and sometimes violent, or you might ignore any sense of pain even though there might actually be something wrong. Other physical effects include higher body temperature, faster heart rate, reduced appetite and dry mouth.

Cocaine and your mental health

Mental health problems that can result from cocaine use include:

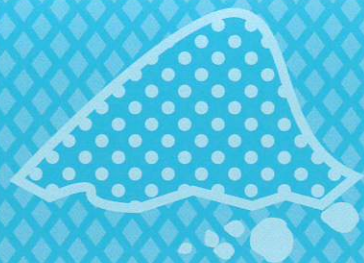
Depression

Anxiety, paranoia and panic attacks

Cocaine psychosis, with symptoms such as delusions, hallucinations, and aggressive behaviour.



Cocaine



What happens if I stop using?

If you have been using cocaine regularly you may have withdrawal symptoms when you stop. How bad these symptoms are depends on how much you've been using and how often, as well as what kind of shape you are in.



Some common withdrawal symptoms are:

- Irritability
- Sleeplessness
- Depression/anxiety
- Mood swings
- Headaches
- Feeling hungry
- Difficulty concentrating.

If someone overdoses

Taking too much cocaine can cause someone to overdose. This may lead to things like tremors and muscle twitches, nausea and vomiting, changes in heartbeat, high temperature, agitation and seizures. This will look different depending on what's happening for the person (e.g. they may have mixed with other drugs).

If you are worried about someone overdosing you can:



Call 000 –
you won't get into trouble for asking for help



Stay with your friend;
don't leave them alone



Put your friend on their side if they are unconscious or in case they vomit



Keep an eye on their breathing.

Staying safe

There is always a risk that something bad will happen if you use cocaine. You can reduce some of this risk by:



Going low, going slow.
Just use a bit at a time and wait to see what it feels like before taking more.



Not mixing with other drugs or alcohol – it can get out of control quickly.



Only using with people you trust. It's good if someone in your group isn't using to keep an eye on you. Keep an eye on your mates too.



Never sharing needles.
Use clean equipment to avoid the risk of contracting blood-borne viruses like HIV or Hepatitis C.



Making sure that you eat, even if you don't feel like it.



Taking a break. Make sure that you have cocaine free days and try not to use them before anything big (e.g. exams).



Calling an ambulance (000) if things get bad.

Getting help

If your cocaine use is starting to affect things that matter, like your mental health, wellbeing or your friendships, it can be a good idea to talk to someone about your options, such as different ways to reduce or stop your use. Whatever you decide, **headspace** can help.



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For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit headspace.org.au