

## Reducing Harm & Finding Help, Continued

or in an outpatient setting (when the patient lives at home, but goes to treatment appointments 1-7 times per week). Effective types of counseling for cocaine addiction include cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, and twelve-step facilitation.

There are also recovery support groups and online forums that can help people struggling with cocaine addiction. Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics



Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, and groups like SMART Recovery or LifeRing are all available to support people with cocaine addiction.

Recovery apps specific to cocaine addiction can be downloaded to your smart phone that provide lists of recovery support meetings, reading material, tools like sobriety counters, and more.

# Cocaine



## Information about Your Health



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## Cocaine – What Is It?

Cocaine is a drug made from the leaves of the coca plant. It takes the form of a white powder or whitish rock crystal, called crack, and users generally snort, smoke, or inject it. Cocaine is a stimulant, which means it speeds up the body and brain.

## Cocaine & My Health

### Shorter Term

*Intoxication:* Cocaine use can cause a higher body temperature and heart rate, insomnia, restlessness, anxiety, panic attacks, and paranoia. It can also result in problems with the heart and brain, including strokes and heart attacks.

*Overdose:* More cocaine than your body can handle causes an overdose, which can be fatal. Alcohol and cocaine together are more likely to result in overdose than the same amount of either drug alone. The combination of alcohol and cocaine produces a substance called **cocaethylene that is more toxic to the body than cocaine alone**. Mixing cocaine



## Cocaine & My Health, Continued

with heroin, called speedballing, is responsible for more drug overdoses than using cocaine alone. Stimulants cause your body to use more oxygen while opioids slow down your breathing. You overdose because your body does not have the oxygen it needs to function.

*Unknown drugs:* Because cocaine is illegal, it carries additional risks. Users cannot be sure of the drug's contents or dose.

### Longer Term

*Addiction:* Cocaine has addictive potential. Not everyone who uses cocaine becomes addicted, but some do. People who use cocaine often experience withdrawal symptoms if they stop. Symptoms of cocaine withdrawal can be tiredness, insomnia, and depression.

*Other health issues:* Snorting cocaine can cause nose and sinus damage, including nosebleeds and a less sensitive sense of smell. Other long-term effects of cocaine use include nutritional deficiencies, movement disorders (such as Parkinson's Disease), and mental health problems. People who inject cocaine and share injection equipment are more likely to contract diseases (such as HIV and hepatitis B or C) or infections at the site of the injection. Injecting cocaine can also damage your veins.

## Reducing Harm & Finding Help

People who use cocaine can reduce their risk of harm by being educated about what drugs they are taking.

They can prioritize sleep and nutrition. They can avoid mixing cocaine with other substances such as opioids (including heroin) or alcohol. People who inject cocaine can use new syringes and other



injection equipment. Information on safe injection techniques, preventing drug overdoses and reducing drug-related harm for cocaine users can be downloaded from the Harm Reduction Coalition website.

<http://harmreduction.org>

People who wish to stop using cocaine should be aware that withdrawal may occur, but that it does not always need to be medically-supervised. However, physicians, detox facilities, and addiction treatment programs can help with withdrawal.

Cocaine addiction can be treated in a residential setting (often called “rehab”)