



## COCAINE

Cocaine is the strongest stimulant drug (a drug that increases the rate at which organs controlled by the central nervous system, or CNS, function) available to the general public. Cocaine hydrochloride is derived from the erythroxylon coca bush grown in the mountainous region of South America. Cocaine is chemically a salt produced from coca paste. This is the first product extracted from the leaf. Cocaine is an odorless, white crystalline substance in powder or lump form. It is very soluble in water. When sold on the streets, coke is often diluted with other white powders, such as cornstarch, baby laxatives (mannitol), sugars (lactose), local anesthetics (lidocaine) or other CNS stimulants (ephedrine).

Cocaine is one of the most powerfully addictive of the drugs of abuse—and, it is a drug that can *kill*. No individual can predict whether he or she will become addicted or whether the next dose of cocaine will prove fatal. Cocaine can be snorted through the nose, smoked or injected. Injecting the substance (or injecting any drug) carries the added risk of infection with HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) if the users share a needle with individuals already infected with the virus.

Cocaine is not a new drug. Over a hundred years ago it was extremely popular in the United States and was in a variety of products (Coca-Cola was one of the best known), including patient medicines, tonics, ointments and throat lozenges. By 1914, fears about the drug's power and concern about the number of people who become dependent on cocaine, or suffered other toxic consequences, led most states and the federal government to prohibit or restrict its use.

### Street Names

Blow  
"C"  
Coke  
Rock  
Toot  
Charlie

Cola  
Flake  
Pearl  
Snow  
White  
Bennies

Leaf  
Nose  
Gold Dust  
Stardust  
White Lady  
Nose Candy

## **Cocaine Is Illegal**

The rise of cocaine as the drug of choice among upper and middle-class Americans has been chronicled in the media since the early 1980s. In 1873, the anesthetic properties of cocaine were first recognized in western society by a physician named Alexander Bennett. No one acted upon their discovery until 1883, when a German military physician distributed cocaine to soldiers and perceived an improvement in their performances. Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud tried the drug to combat personal depression. He believed it to be a new wonder drug because it helped him through a period of melancholy.

In the meantime, cocaine had found its way into late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century society. The drug made its first appearance as an ingredient in an alcoholic beverage called "Vin Maria." Later, it was used as an ingredient in a new soft drink called Coca-Cola.

The medical community had concerns about the drug when it became apparent that many users suffered from both dependence and unpleasant side effects. In 1914, the Harrison Act outlawed the use of cocaine in the United States.

## **Quick Smarts**

- Cocaine is a powerful central nervous system stimulant.
- It produces a short-lived sense of euphoria.
- Heavy use of the drug can be physically harmful.
- Coke users can become dependent on the drug.
- Cocaine abuse had become a serious social problem.
- Exposure to the drug can harm a developing fetus.
- Cocaine users are at increased risk of infectious disease.

## **Cocaine Can Be Administered**

Cocaine can be absorbed through any mucous membrane, and is circulated in the blood to the heart, lungs and other body organs. Inhaled internally, it reaches the brain and neurons of the sympathetic nervous system in three minutes; injected, in fifteen seconds; smoked, in seven seconds. Some users "snort" through the nose. Others freebase on a piece of foil. The rising wisps of smoke are inhaled (called, "chasing the dragon"). Many inject a cocaine solution under the skin, into a muscle or into a vein. The most dramatic cocaine high, and the most dangerous, is smoking "alkaloidal base" or cocaine freebase.

Cocaine is a vasoconstrictor, narrowing the blood vessels. Heart rate, blood pressure and respiration are quickened. Cocaine is metabolized rapidly by the blood and liver. Its impact on the sympathetic nervous system mimics the body's "fright or flight" response to fear or a challenge.

The extreme euphoria associated with cocaine use resembles that produced by direct electrical stimulation of the reward centers of the brain. The initial “rush” tapers off and a “let-down” or dullness follows. Cocaine makes users feel energetic, alert and self-confident. With continued use, many become extremely anxious and depressed. Some become paranoid and suspicious following a high.

## **Physical Effects**

Cocaine may produce:

- Increased blood pressure and heart rate with constricted blood vessels; these physiological changes can produce heart attacks
- Strokes
- Nausea, headaches, sweating and, in some cases, seizures
- Chest pain, breathing difficulties and respiratory failure
- Trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, reduced sex drive
- Drug dependence
- Loss of sense of smell and nose bleeds, sores around the nose and upper lip
- Problem swallowing and hoarseness
- Sinus problems
- AIDS, hepatitis and other infections
- Endocarditis
- Severe chest pain, wheezing, black phlegm and chronic cough

## **Cocaine Can Harm Health**

- By causing immediate death
- By harming the body
- By harming the brain
- By causing dependence
- By increasing the risk of HIV and Hepatitis B
- By increasing the risks of accidents, violence and crime

## **Before You Risk IT...**

- Know the law—Cocaine, in any form, is illegal.
- Stay informed—Even first-time users can have seizures or fatal heart attacks.
- Know the risks—Combining cocaine with other drugs is extremely dangerous. The effects of one drug can magnify the other.
- Be aware—Cocaine is expensive.
- Stay in control—Cocaine impairs your judgment, which may lead to unwise decisions.
- Look around you—The vast majority of teens are not using cocaine.

## **Know the Outcome**

- Be aware of the risks. Car crashes, falls, burns, drowning, and suicide are all linked to use.
- Keep your edge. Drug use can ruin your looks, make you depressed and contribute to bad grades.
- Play it safe. One incident of use can lead to addiction or even death.
- Do the smart thing. Using drugs puts your health, education, family ties and social life at risk.
- Get with the program. Doing drugs is not “in” anymore.
- Face your problems. Using drugs won't help you escape your problems, it will only create more.
- Be a real friend. If you know someone with a drug problem, be part of the solution, urge your friend to get help.