

## Cocaine

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### Brief Description

Cocaine is a powerfully addictive central nervous system stimulant that is snorted, injected, or smoked. Crack is cocaine hydrochloride powder that has been processed to form a rock crystal that is then usually smoked.

### Street Names

Coke, snow, flake, blow

### Effects

Cocaine usually makes the user feel euphoric and energetic, but also increases body temperature, blood pressure, and heart rate. Users risk heart attacks, respiratory failure, strokes, seizures, abdominal pain, and nausea. In rare cases, sudden death can occur on the first use of cocaine or unexpectedly afterwards.

### How Is Cocaine Abused?

Three routes of administration are commonly used for cocaine: snorting, injecting, and smoking. Snorting is the process of inhaling cocaine powder through the nose, where it is absorbed into the bloodstream through the nasal tissues. Injecting is the use of a needle to insert the drug directly into the bloodstream. Smoking involves inhaling cocaine vapor or smoke into the lungs, where absorption into the bloodstream is as rapid as it is by injection. All three methods of cocaine abuse can lead to addiction and other severe health problems, including increasing the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

### What Adverse Effects Does Cocaine Have on Health?

Abusing cocaine has a variety of adverse effects on the body. For example, cocaine constricts blood vessels, dilates pupils, and increases body temperature, heart rate, and blood pressure. It can also cause headaches and gastrointestinal complications such as abdominal pain and nausea. Because cocaine tends to decrease appetite, chronic users can become malnourished as well.

### Statistics and Trends

In 2009, 4.8 million Americans age 12 and older had abused cocaine in any form and 1.0 million had abused crack at least once in the year prior to being surveyed. Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration Web Site).