
THE TRUTH ABOUT
COCAINE
Blow
Flake
Sniff
Charlie
Snow
drugfreeworld.org

WHY THIS BOOKLET WAS PRODUCED

You hear a lot of talk about drugs these days—at school, in the streets, on the internet and TV. Some of it is true, some not.

What you may not know is that much of what you hear about drugs actually comes from those selling them. Former dealers have said they would tell people anything to get them to buy drugs.

You need the real facts and the truth about drugs so you can make an informed decision about them. That is why we have prepared this booklet—for you.

Your feedback is important to us, so let us know what you think about this booklet. Visit us at **DrugFreeWorld.org** and email us at **info@drugfreeworld.org**.

WHAT IS COCAINE?

Cocaine is a highly addictive stimulant drug made from the leaves of the South American coca plant. The term *cocaine* refers to the drug in its powder or crystal form.* Drug dealers often mix the powder with substances like cornstarch, talcum powder, sugar or other drugs such as procaine (a local anesthetic) or amphetamines.

Cocaine was first developed as an anesthetic and later used as a painkiller. On the street, it is usually snorted, where the powder is absorbed into the bloodstream through the nasal tissues. It can also be ingested or rubbed on the gums. When cocaine is smoked, it is called *freebasing*.

Some abusers inject cocaine to feel its effects more quickly, and this greatly increases the risk of overdose. Cocaine is sometimes mixed with heroin or fentanyl, a powerful opioid that is 50 times stronger than heroin. These combinations are especially dangerous and have caused many overdose deaths.

* In its crystal form, it is called *crack cocaine*. For more information, see *The Truth About Crack Cocaine* in this series.

A DEADLY WHITE POWDER

Cocaine is a dangerous drug. Studies have shown that it is highly addictive and can alter brain structure and function with repeated use. For many, it is almost impossible to break free from the physical and mental hold. Cocaine stimulates key receptors (nerve endings that sense changes in the body) in the brain, creating a temporary sense of euphoria. Tolerance develops quickly, meaning users need higher doses and more frequent use to try to achieve the same effect.

Today, cocaine is a global, multibillion-dollar business. Users come from all economic levels, occupations and ages—even schoolchildren as young as eight.

Cocaine use can cause death from respiratory failure, stroke, cerebral hemorrhage (bleeding in the brain) or heart attack. Babies born to cocaine-addicted mothers may be addicted themselves and can suffer from birth defects and health issues.

Despite its dangers, cocaine use continues to increase, likely because users find it so difficult to escape addiction.

STREET NAMES

Some common street names for cocaine include:

- Angel Powder
- Aunt Nora
- Big C
- Blow
- C-Dust
- Charlie
- Cocaine
- Coke
- Dust
- Flake
- Mojo
- Nose Candy
- Paradise
- Snow
- Speedball (mixed with heroin)
- Sugar
- Toot
- White

"You believe that coke will increase your perceptions, that it will allow you to surpass yourself, that you will be able to control things. It's bloody nonsense. After a while, you don't pay your bills anymore, you don't wash yourself anymore, you give up your friends and your family. YOU WILL BECOME DEFENSELESS AND ALONE."—Nigel



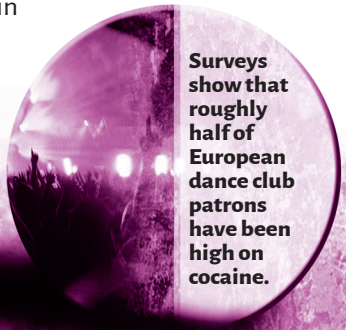
INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS

Cocaine is one of the most widely trafficked illegal drugs. Recent data shows that global seizures of cocaine have continued to increase, totaling 2,026 metric tons, with the largest amounts intercepted in South America.

According to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, cocaine is the second most commonly used illegal drug in Europe.

An estimated 2.2 million people ages 15 to 34 reported using cocaine at least once in the previous year.

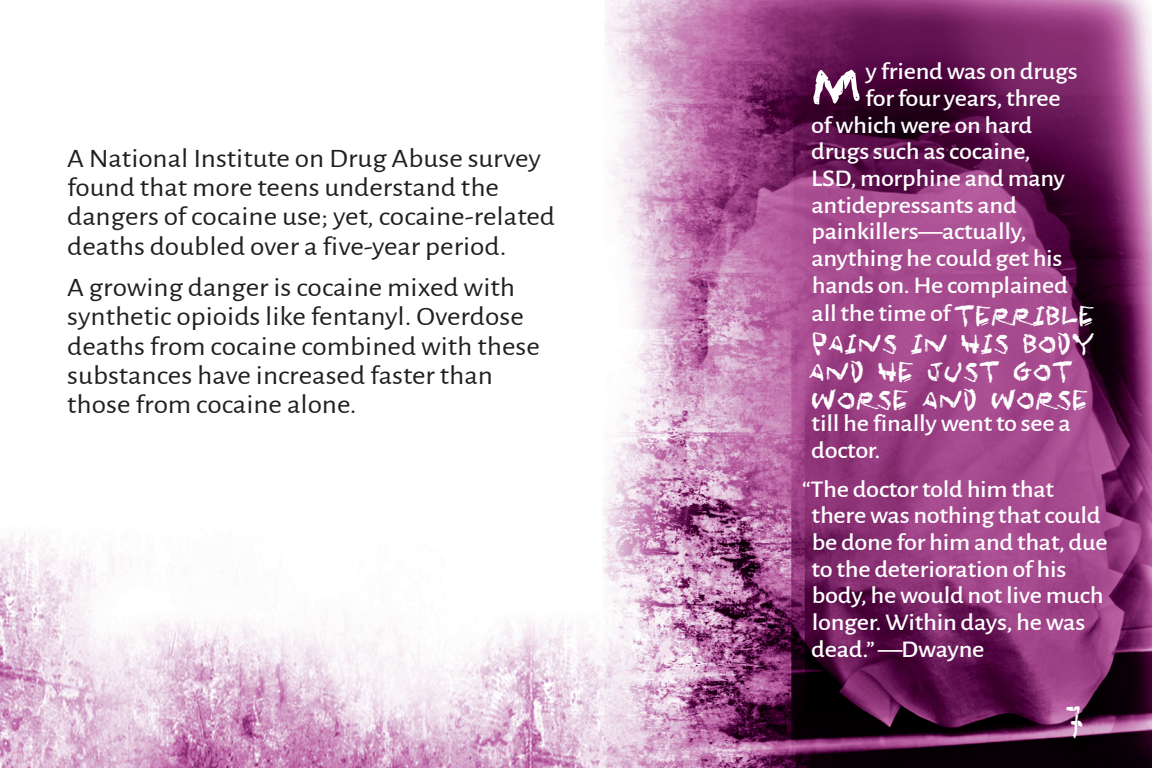
In the United States, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that 5.5 million Americans aged 12 and older had used cocaine within a year. Among those aged 18 to 25, 1 in 20 reported using cocaine in some form in the past year.



Surveys show that roughly half of European dance club patrons have been high on cocaine.

A National Institute on Drug Abuse survey found that more teens understand the dangers of cocaine use; yet, cocaine-related deaths doubled over a five-year period.

A growing danger is cocaine mixed with synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Overdose deaths from cocaine combined with these substances have increased faster than those from cocaine alone.



My friend was on drugs for four years, three of which were on hard drugs such as cocaine, LSD, morphine and many antidepressants and painkillers—actually, anything he could get his hands on. He complained all the time of TERRIBLE PAINS IN HIS BODY AND HE JUST GOT WORSE AND WORSE till he finally went to see a doctor.

"The doctor told him that there was nothing that could be done for him and that, due to the deterioration of his body, he would not live much longer. Within days, he was dead." —Dwayne

WHY IS COCAINE SO HIGHLY A

Cocaine, like heroin and methamphetamine,* is one of the most addictive illegal drugs available. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, in a one-year period, 5.5 million people used cocaine, including crack, in a year, with about a million of those becoming addicted.



Cocaine activates pleasure centers within the brain, causing temporary euphoria. Users quickly develop tolerance, needing more of the drug to achieve the same high.

DEADLY COMBINATION OF DRUGS

Cocaine is sometimes mixed with other drugs, including tranquilizers, amphetamines,† marijuana and heroin. These combinations greatly increase the danger of using cocaine. Along with a higher chance of developing a two-drug habit, mixing substances can easily be fatal.

DDICTIVE?

I had no more future. I did not see how I could escape my cocaine dependence. I was lost. I was 'exploding' and unable to stop myself from continuing to seriously abuse cocaine. I HAD HALLUCINATIONS THAT ANIMALS WERE CRAWLING UNDER MY SKIN. I felt them each time I shot up and scraped myself with the point of my syringe until I started bleeding in order to make them leave. I was once bleeding so heavily from this I had to be taken to the hospital." —Susan



* methamphetamine: a highly addictive central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) stimulant

† amphetamine: a central nervous system stimulant, often called *speed*, with lower potency than methamphetamine

EFFECTS OF COCAINE

WHAT ARE THE SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF COCAINE?

Cocaine produces a short-lived, intense high that is immediately followed by the opposite—deep depression, edginess and a craving for more of the drug. Users may not eat or sleep properly and can experience greatly increased heart rate, muscle spasms and convulsions. Even when not high, users can feel paranoid,* angry, hostile and anxious.



Cocaine use increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, seizure or respiratory failure, any of which can result in sudden death.

WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF COCAINE?

The term *dope fiend* was originally coined many years ago to describe the negative side effects of constant cocaine use. As tolerance of the drug increases, it becomes necessary to take greater and greater quantities to try to get the same high. Prolonged daily use causes sleep deprivation and loss of appetite. A person

* paranoid: extremely and unreasonably suspicious, distrustful or afraid of other people without evidence or justification

can become psychotic and begin to experience hallucinations.

Cocaine changes the brain's chemical processing, making users feel they need it to function normally. Addiction to cocaine, like with other drugs, results in lost interest in other areas of life.

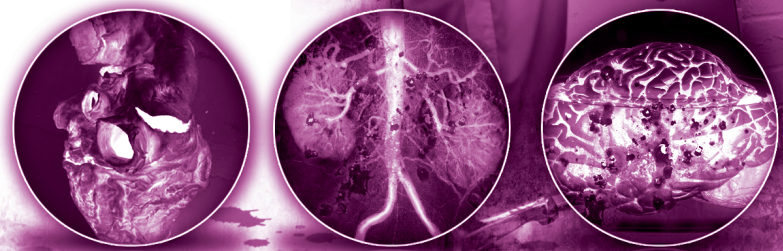
Coming down from cocaine causes severe depression, which can drive people to do almost anything to get more.

If they can't get more cocaine, the depression can lead to violence or suicide.

"Don't touch cocaine. I spent two years in jail because of this drug. AND WHEN I GOT OUT, LIFE WAS SO HARD I STARTED TAKING THE DRUG AGAIN. I know 10 girls who became prostitutes because of coke. It's much more extreme and degrading than we believe. At the time we don't realize to what degree it destroys us."
—Shawne

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

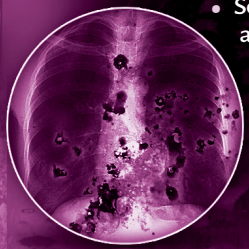
- Loss of appetite
- Increased heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature
- Constricted blood vessels
- Faster breathing
- Dilated pupils
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Nausea
- Hyperstimulation
- Bizarre, erratic, sometimes violent behavior
- Hallucinations, hyperexcitability, irritability
- Sensation of bugs crawling under the skin
- Intense euphoria
- Anxiety and paranoia
- Depression
- Intense drug craving
- Panic and psychosis
- Convulsions, seizures and sudden death from high doses (even one time)



Cocaine can damage the heart, kidneys, brain and lungs.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

- Permanent damage to blood vessels in the heart and brain
- High blood pressure leading to heart attacks, strokes and death
- Liver, kidney and lung damage
- Nasal tissue damage if snorted
- Respiratory failure if smoked
- Infectious diseases and abscesses if injected
- Malnutrition, weight loss
- Severe tooth decay
- Hallucinations (hearing, touch)
- Sexual problems, reproductive damage and infertility (for both men and women)
- Disorientation, apathy, confused exhaustion
- Mood swings and irritability
- Risky behavior
- Delirium or psychosis
- Severe depression
- Tolerance and addiction (even after just one use)



CHILDREN: THE MOST INNOCENT VICTIMS OF COCAINE

People often say, "I take drugs, but that's my business!" However, drug use always has innocent victims: people hurt by addicts who commit crimes to fund their habit and those killed in traffic accidents caused by cocaine-impaired drivers.

The most tragic victims of cocaine are babies born to mothers who used it during pregnancy. In the US alone, tens of thousands of babies are born each year having already been exposed to cocaine.

Even those not born addicted often have physical problems, including premature birth, low birthweight, stunted growth, birth defects and nervous system damage.

Low-birthweight babies are 20 times more likely to die in their first month of life than those with normal weight, and face a higher risk of lifelong conditions such as intellectual disabilities and brain damage.

The societal impact of this human tragedy has yet to be fully measured.

COCAINE: A SHORT HISTORY

Coca is one of the oldest and most potent natural stimulants. Around 5,000 years ago, ancient Incas in the Andes chewed coca leaves to increase heart rate and breathing to cope with living in thin mountain air.

Native Peruvians chewed coca leaves only during religious ceremonies. This changed when Spanish soldiers invaded Peru in 1532 and gave coca to forced Indian laborers to keep them working in silver mines because it made them easier to control and exploit.

German chemist Albert Niemann first extracted cocaine from coca leaves in 1859. It became popular in the medical community in the 1880s.

Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, who used the drug himself, was the first to broadly promote cocaine as a tonic to cure depression and sexual impotence.



What began as a religious tradition in the Andes has turned into drug abuse throughout the world.

In 1884, he published the article "Über Coca" ("About Coke"), calling it "magical." Although he noted its dangers, Freud still recommended it to close friends. One friend experienced severe hallucinations with "white snakes creeping over his skin." Freud believed "the toxic dose [of cocaine] is very high, and there seems to be no lethal dose," but at least one of his patients died from a high dose he prescribed.

In 1886, John Pemberton added coca leaves to his new soft drink, Coca-Cola.

The drink's energizing effects made it very popular but, by 1903, public pressure forced the company to remove cocaine from the soft drink.

From the 1850s to the early 1900s, cocaine- and opium-laced products were broadly used by people of all social classes.

With its growing use, hospitals and medical literature started reporting cases of nasal damage resulting from snorting cocaine.

Cocaine was popular in the silent film industry, and Hollywood promoted it, influencing millions.

In 1912, the US reported 5,000 cocaine-related



deaths in one year. The drug was banned within a decade.

Cocaine became popular again in the 1970s, especially among entertainers and businesspeople. The drug seemed to be the perfect companion for a trip into the fast lane. At some American universities, the percentage of students who experimented with cocaine increased tenfold.

By the late 1970s, Colombian drug traffickers built networks to smuggle cocaine into the US.

At the end of the 1980s, cocaine was no longer just the drug of choice for the wealthy; it was known as America's most dangerous and addictive drug, linked to poverty, crime and death.

In the early 1990s, the Colombian drug cartels produced and exported 500 to 800 tons of cocaine to the US yearly, but also to Europe and Asia. Law enforcement agencies dismantled major cartels in the mid-1990s, but smaller groups emerged. Today, more than 300 known active drug smuggling organizations operate in Colombia.

Cocaine remains one of the most trafficked illegal drugs in the world despite its history of causing addiction, loss of life and the violent crime associated with the criminals who traffic it.

WHAT DEALERS WILL TELL YOU

When teens were surveyed to find out why they started using drugs in the first place, 55 percent replied that it was due to pressure from their friends. They wanted to be cool and popular. Dealers know this.

They will approach you as a friend and offer to "help you out" with "something to bring you up." The drug will "help you fit in" or "make you cool."

Drug dealers, motivated by the money they make, will say anything to get you to buy their drugs. They will tell you that "cocaine will make your life a party."

They don't care if the drugs ruin your life as long as they get paid. All they care about is money. Former dealers admit they viewed buyers as "pawns in a chess game."

Get the facts about drugs. Make your own decisions.



"With coke, you are like a moth stuck on a light. It attracts you more and more and you can't stop it. It's not physical. It's in your head. The more you have it, the more you take it. I have injected it in myself every 10 minutes. I borrowed money from the bank to buy it. One day I became unemployed. It was worse. I used to shoot up all the time. THIS THING MADE ME INSANE. I KNEW IT, BUT I CONTINUED. I BECAME A TOTAL FAILURE."
—Marilyn

The Truth About Drugs

Drugs are essentially poisons. The amount taken determines the effect.

A small amount acts as a stimulant (speeds you up). A greater amount acts as a sedative (slows you down). An even larger amount poisons and can kill.

This is true of any drug. Only the amount needed to achieve the effect differs.

But many drugs have another liability: they directly affect the mind. They can distort the user's perception of what is happening around him or her. As a result, the person's actions may be odd, irrational, inappropriate and even destructive.

Drugs block off all sensations, the desirable ones along with the undesirable. So, while providing short-term help in the relief of pain, they also wipe out ability and alertness and muddy one's thinking.

Medicines are drugs that are intended to speed up, slow down or change something about the way your body is working to try to make it work better. Sometimes they are necessary. But they are still drugs: they act as stimulants or sedatives, and too much can kill you. So if you do not use medicines as they are supposed to be used, they can be as dangerous as illegal drugs.

The real answer is to get the facts and to not take drugs in the first place.



WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE DRUGS?

People take drugs because they want to change something in their lives.

Here are some of the reasons young people have given for taking drugs:

- To fit in
- To escape or relax
- To relieve boredom
- To seem grown-up
- To rebel
- To experiment

They think drugs are a solution. But eventually, drugs become the problem.

Difficult as it may be to face one's problems, the consequences of drug use are always worse than the problem one is trying to solve with them. The real answer is to get the facts and to not take drugs in the first place.



Millions of copies of booklets such as this have been distributed to people around the world in over 20 languages.



As new drugs appear on the streets and more information about their effects becomes known, existing booklets are updated and new ones created.

The booklets are published by the Foundation for a Drug-Free World, a nonprofit public benefit organization headquartered in Los Angeles, California.

The foundation provides educational materials, advice and coordination for its international drug prevention network. It works with youth, parents, educators, volunteer organizations and government agencies—anyone with an interest in helping people lead lives free from drug abuse.

REFERENCES:

For the references used to compile this booklet, go to DrugFreeWorld.org/refs.

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FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

This booklet is one in a series of publications that covers the facts about marijuana, alcohol, fentanyl, synthetic drugs, Ecstasy, cocaine, crack cocaine, crystal meth and methamphetamine, inhalants, heroin, LSD and prescription drug abuse. Armed with this information, the reader can make the decision to live a drug-free life.

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