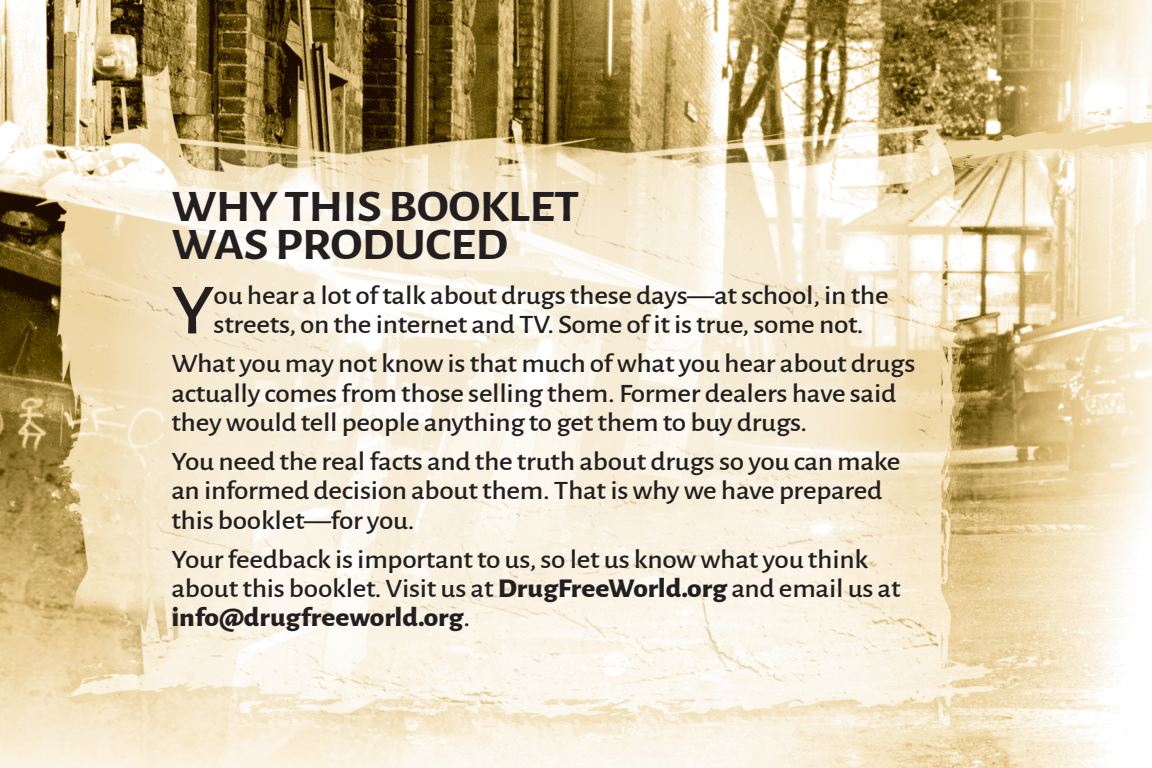

THE TRUTH ABOUT
CRACK
Cocaine
Base
Ball
Jelly Beans
Nuggets
Rock
drugfreeworld.org



# 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 Crack Cocaine?



Crack cocaine is a powerful, highly addictive stimulant made from powdered cocaine.* It comes in solid blocks or crystals that can be yellow, pale rose or white. The name *crack* comes from the cracking or popping sound it makes when heated and smoked.

In the 1980s, crack became a drug of abuse in the United States and has since spread across North and South America, Europe and other parts of the world. Crack can be smoked or snorted. Smoking crack allows it to reach the brain quickly, creating an intense, immediate high that only lasts about 15 minutes. Smoking crack can lead to addiction very quickly, sometimes even after the first use. People addicted to crack get caught in a constant cycle of trying to maintain that initial high.

Because cocaine used to be very expensive, it was considered a "rich man's drug." Crack, on the other hand, is sold at prices low enough that even teenagers can afford it—at least at first. But once someone becomes addicted, the cost rises quickly as they need more to satisfy their habit.

* For more information about cocaine in its powdered form, see *The Truth About Cocaine* booklet in this series.



# Street Names

Some common street names for crack cocaine include:

- Apple Jack
- Base
- Bazooka
- Candy
- Cloud
- Cookies
- Crack
- Crack Cocaine
- Crunch & Munch
- Devil Smoke
- Dice
- Fat Bags
- Freebase
- French Fries
- Glo
- Gravel
- Grit
- Hail
- Hard Hotcakes
- Ice Cubes
- Jelly Beans
- Kryptonite
- Nuggets
- Paste
- Raw
- Rock(s)
- Rox or Roxanne
- Scramble
- Sleet
- Sugar Block
- Troop



I lived with a crack addict for nearly a year. I loved that addict, who was my boyfriend, with all my heart, but I couldn't stick [with] it anymore.

"The police stopped and searched me. We were raided at 6:00 a.m. My ex stole incessantly and couldn't tear himself away from his pipe.

"I think crack is more evil than heroin—one pipe can be all it takes to turn you into an immoral monster." —Audrey

# International Statistics

About 778,000 people aged 12 and older in the United States reported they have used crack in the past year.

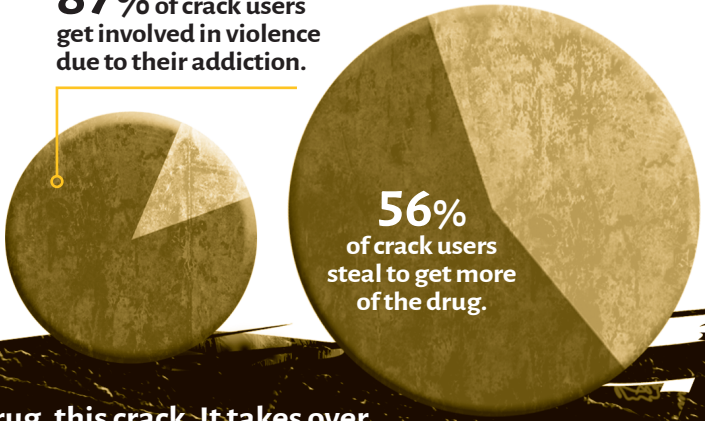
A survey showed that over 42 million people in the US (more than 12 percent of the population) have used some form of cocaine in their lives, with over 10.1 million specifically using crack. This same survey showed that the number of people using crack in the month before the survey was the highest it had been in 14 years.

In Europe, the number of first-time users of crack cocaine seeking treatment increased by 42 percent over five years.

Internationally, there is also evidence that first-time users are getting younger. For example, in Brazil, a significant number of first-time crack users are teenagers, some as young as 12 and 13 years old, showing a concerning trend.



# CRACK & CRIME




It's a totally selfish drug, this crack. It takes over your life. Crack grabs ahold quickly. It doesn't take long at all. The cravings it produces are massive. And you end up using it more frequently because the high is short-lasting." —Peter

# Why Is Crack Cocaine So Highly Addictive?

Crack cocaine is one of the most addictive illegal drugs. It affects pleasure centers in the brain, creating intense false euphoria. Because the high is so short, users often smoke crack repeatedly to try to keep the feeling going.

While the first use may be a person's choice, repeated use quickly weakens self-control and judgment, making it hard to stop. Over time, addiction takes over, making crack the most important thing in the user's life, despite the harm it causes.





I had developed a $2,000-per-week crack cocaine habit and desperately wanted to be free from the chains."
—Jennifer



# Effects of Crack Cocaine

## WHAT ARE THE SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF CRACK COCAINE?

Crack causes a short-lived, intense high followed by deep depression, edginess and strong cravings for more. Users often don't eat or sleep properly and may experience a faster heart rate, muscle spasms and convulsions. It can make users feel paranoid,* angry, hostile or anxious—even when not high.

Crack use increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, seizure or breathing problems, all of which can lead to sudden death.

Smoking crack also carries additional health risks. It is often mixed with other substances that produce toxic fumes when burned. Short crack pipes can cause cracked and blistered lips, known as *crack lip*, from having the hot pipe pressed against their lips.

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

## WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF CRACK COCAINE?

In addition to the risks associated with cocaine use, such as constricted blood vessels, increased temperature, elevated heart rate and high blood pressure, as well as the risk of seizure or heart attack, crack users may experience acute breathing problems, including coughing, shortness of breath, lung trauma and bleeding.



**The only thing on my mind was crack cocaine. And if somebody offers you any of it, you'll jump at it and take it. It's like offering a starving man a loaf of bread if he walks for miles.**

**"Things came to a head for me when I'd been smoking constantly for a couple of weeks. One day I just decided I'd had enough—I couldn't live like this anymore, and I tried to commit suicide.**

**"I'm going to have to try and fight. I hope my survival instincts kick in." —John**

**I retired as a successful corporate exec who had put two daughters through college and had earned my retirement. My retirement party was, however, the beginning of five years of hell. That was when I was introduced to crack cocaine for the first time. Over the next five years, I would lose my home, my wife, all my financial resources, my health and almost my life. I also spent two years in prison." —William**

Long-term effects from using crack cocaine include severe damage to the heart, liver and kidneys. Users are also more likely to have infectious diseases.

Continued daily use causes sleep deprivation and loss of appetite, resulting in malnutrition. Smoking crack cocaine can cause aggressive and paranoid behavior.

As crack cocaine interferes with the way the brain processes chemicals, users need more and more of the drug just to feel "normal." Those who become addicted to crack cocaine, as with most other drugs, lose interest in other areas of life.

Coming down from crack causes severe depression, which becomes deeper after each use. Withdrawal symptoms can get so bad that a person will do anything to get the drug—even commit murder. And if they can't get crack, the depression can drive the addict to suicide.

# Physical & Mental Effects

## SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

Because it is smoked, the effects of crack cocaine are more immediate and more intense than that of powdered cocaine. Short-term effects include:

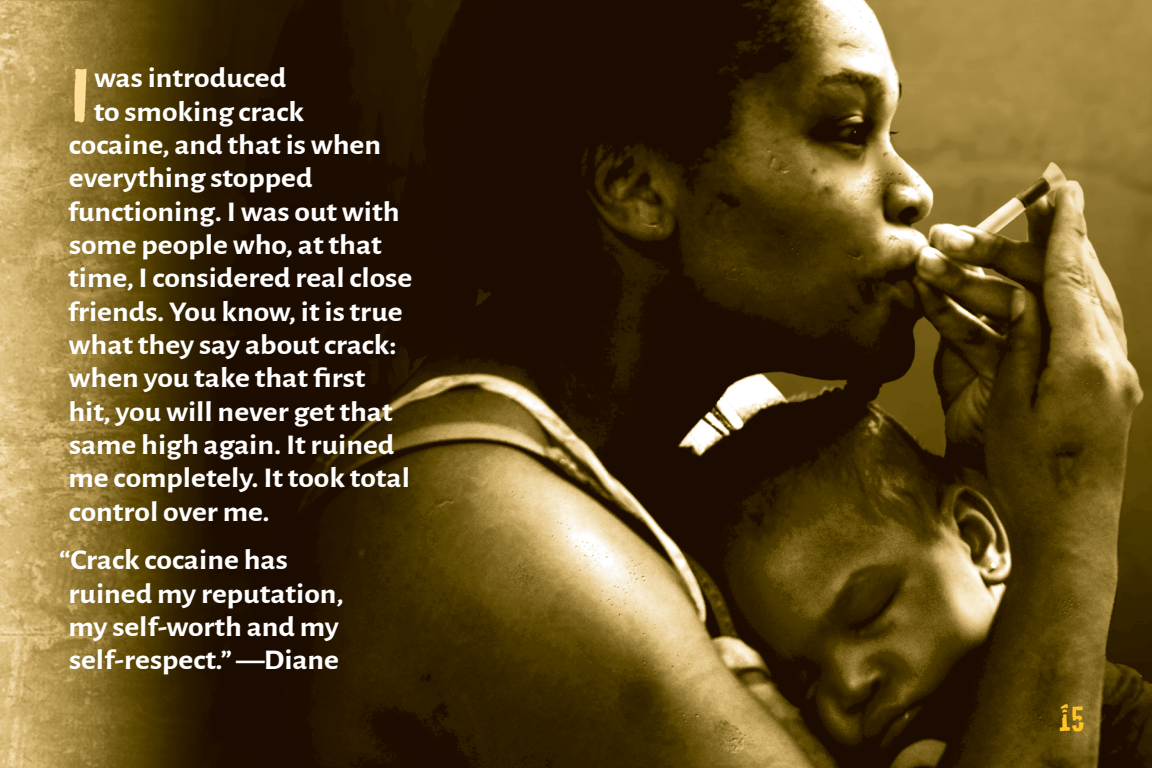
- Loss of appetite
- Increased heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature
- Contracted blood vessels
- Increased rate of breathing
- Dilated pupils
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Nausea
- Hyperstimulation
- Bizarre, erratic, sometimes violent behavior
- Hallucinations, hyperexcitability, irritability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

## LONG-TERM EFFECTS

- Permanent damage to blood vessels in the ears and brain
- High blood pressure leading to heart attacks, strokes and death
- Liver, kidney and lung damage
- Severe chest pains
- Respiratory failure
- Infectious diseases and abscesses if injected
- Malnutrition and weight loss
- Severe tooth decay
- Auditory and tactile hallucinations
- Sexual problems, reproductive damage and infertility (for men and women)
- Disorientation, apathy, confused exhaustion
- Irritability and mood disturbances
- Increased frequency of risky behavior
- Delirium or psychosis
- Severe depression
- Tolerance and addiction

# Children: The Most Innocent Victims of Crack Cocaine

The most innocent victims of crack cocaine are babies born to mothers who use the drug during pregnancy. The March of Dimes, a nonprofit focused on the health of mothers and babies, reports that using cocaine (in any form) during pregnancy can harm both mother and child. This can cause severe bleeding, which may be life-threatening, and can lead to premature birth or miscarriage. Babies exposed to crack may experience withdrawal symptoms at birth and face long-term health problems, such as vision and hearing issues, behavior difficulties, learning problems and trouble focusing.



I was introduced to smoking crack cocaine, and that is when everything stopped functioning. I was out with some people who, at that time, I considered real close friends. You know, it is true what they say about crack: when you take that first hit, you will never get that same high again. It ruined me completely. It took total control over me.

"Crack cocaine has ruined my reputation, my self-worth and my self-respect." —Diane

# Crack Cocaine: A Short History



The use of coca leaves dates back over 3,000 years. Crack cocaine, the crystallized form of cocaine, was developed in the 1970s during the cocaine boom. Its popularity grew in the mid-1980s.

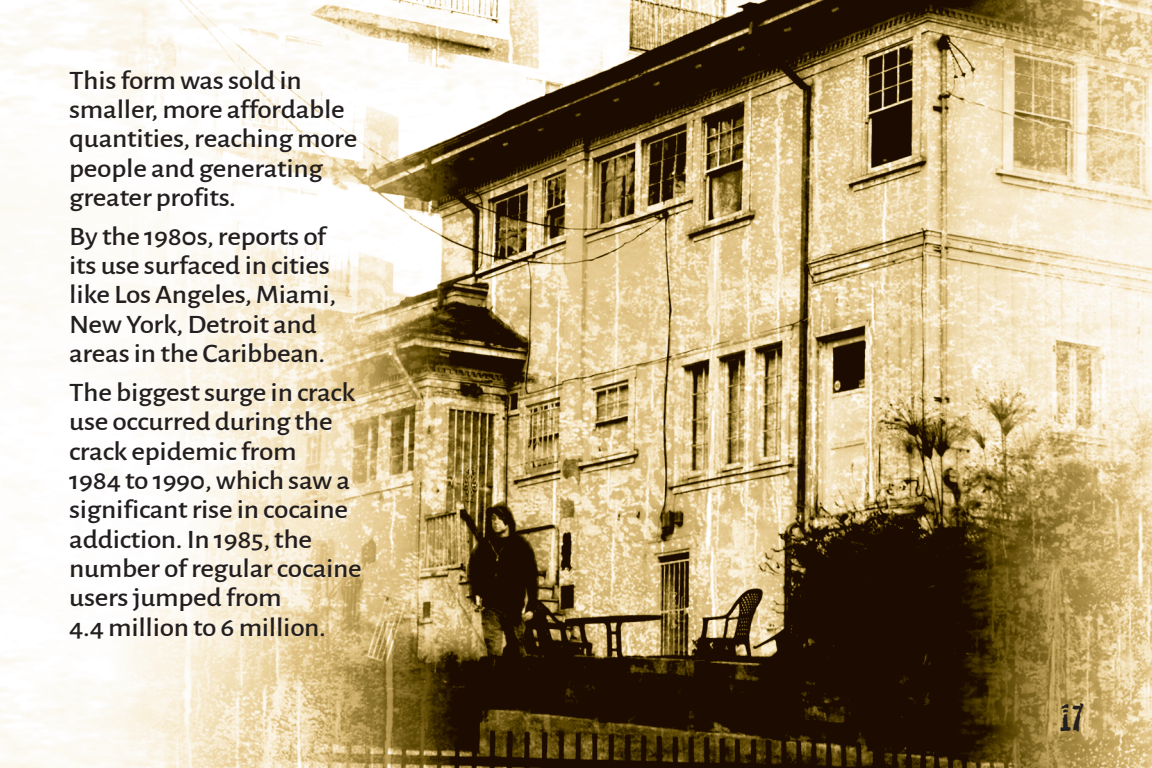
According to the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), by the late 1970s, there was a huge amount of cocaine powder being shipped into the US, causing prices to drop as much as 80 percent. To maintain profits, drug dealers converted powdered cocaine into crack, which could be smoked.

**Crack is a dealer's dream: it produces an instant high and its users become addicted in a very short time.**

This form was sold in smaller, more affordable quantities, reaching more people and generating greater profits.

By the 1980s, reports of its use surfaced in cities like Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Detroit and areas in the Caribbean.

The biggest surge in crack use occurred during the crack epidemic from 1984 to 1990, which saw a significant rise in cocaine addiction. In 1985, the number of regular cocaine users jumped from 4.4 million to 6 million.



By the end of 1986, crack was found in 28 states and Washington, DC. One year later, only four states were not reporting crack availability. Since then, crack use has spread over the Americas, Europe and beyond.

In 2002, the United Kingdom experienced its own crack epidemic, with the number of people seeking help for addiction increasing by nearly 50 percent that year. The UK reported a 74 percent increase in crack seizures between 2000 and 2006.

More recently, reports show the number of people using crack in the past month reached a 14-year high.



# What Dealers Will Tell You

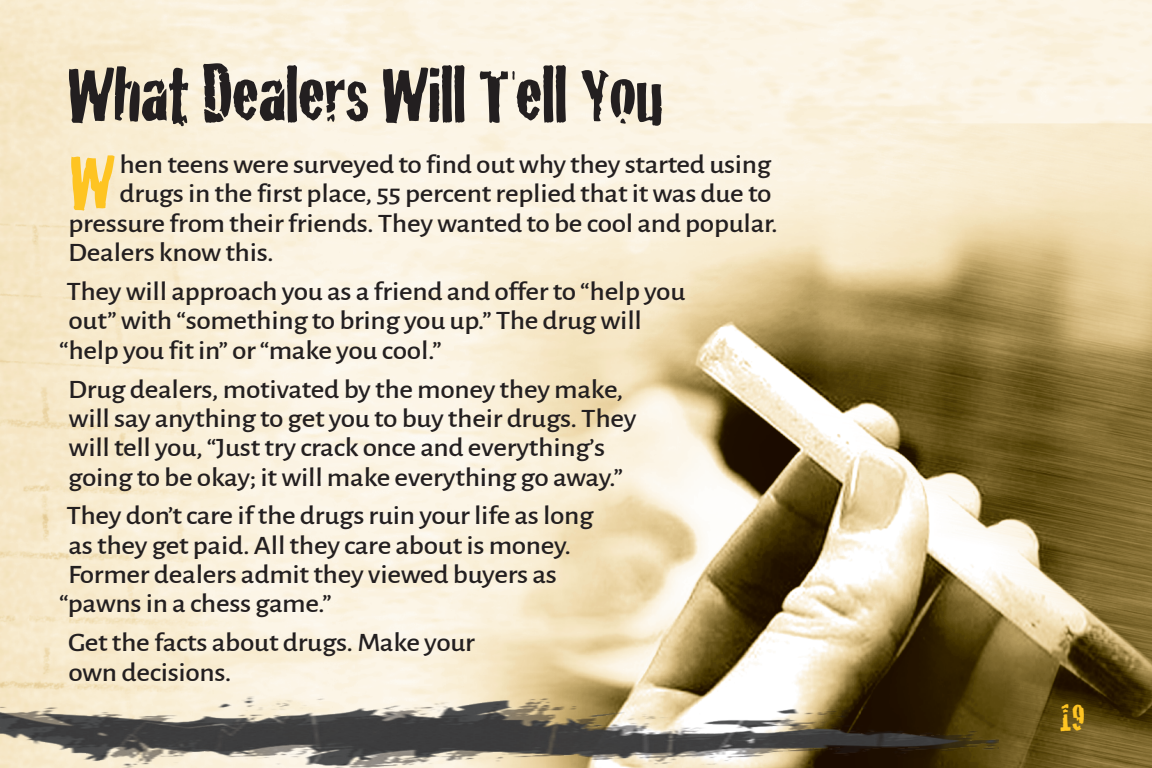
When teens were surveyed to find out why they started using drugs in the first place, 55 percent replied that it was due to pressure from their friends. They wanted to be cool and popular. Dealers know this.

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, "Just try crack once and everything's going to be okay; it will make everything go away."

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.



# The Truth About Drugs

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

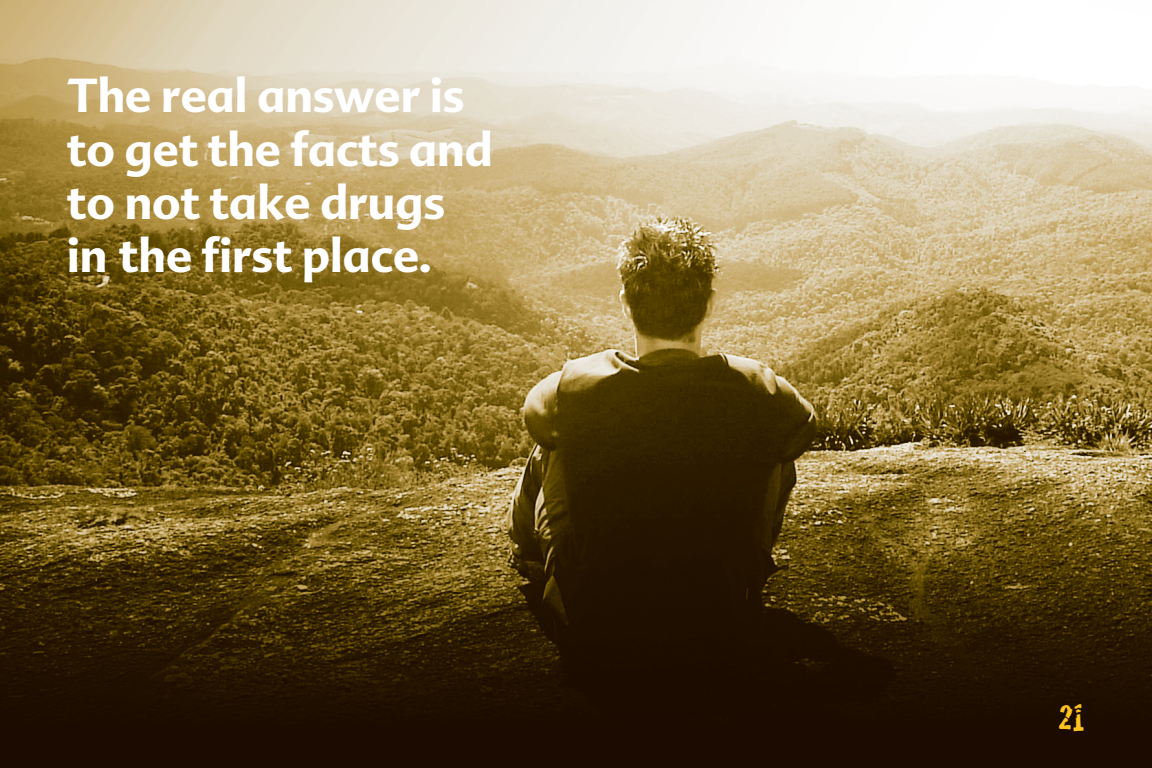
A small amount acts as a stimulant (speeds you up). A greater amount acts as a sedative (slows you down). An even larger amount poisons and can kill.

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.

PHOTO CREDITS: cover: DEA (drugs); inside cover: Corbis; pages 5, 8: DEA (drugs); page 12: courtesy of InfoImagination.org

# 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.

**To do free online courses or to connect with a Drug-Free World Chapter in your area, go to DrugFreeWorld.org**

**Foundation for a Drug-Free World**
DrugFreeWorld.org • info@drugfreeworld.org
1 (888) 668-6378 • 1 (818) 952-5260

**Scan here to download this booklet**

© 2025 Foundation for a Drug-Free World. All Rights Reserved. Truth About Drugs and the Foundation for a Drug-Free World Logo are trademarks owned by the Foundation for a Drug-Free World and are used with its permission. #S001562 - ENGLISH