

Cocaine and Crack

Imagine a life unhindered by the debilitating effects of cocaine and crack.

There's no such thing as

JUST A LITTLE COCAINE USE.

Our bodies demand increasing amounts to reach the same high.

Cocaine is often referred to as coke or snow, due to its white powder-like appearance. A powerful stimulant, cocaine raises the body's physiological activity causing euphoria, high amounts of energy, and excessive talking.

Injected or snorted by users, cocaine can contain other "filler" substances that increase the danger potential.

Crack cocaine is a processed form of cocaine and can be smoked. Crack comes in small, sharp pieces that appear like soap. Because of its intensity, crack reaches the brain faster and is followed by a severe crash.

EFFECTS OF COCAINE USE

Cocaine and crack activate the brain's

pleasure center, creating intense cravings. Extreme lows and depression can follow the highs experienced during use.

Cocaine abuse typically involves a lack of control over one's life, causing legal, financial, and social problems. Physical risks include heart attacks, sexual dysfunction, irregular heartbeat, strokes, depression, seizures, or even death.

The following signs are common with a cocaine or crack dependence:

- Weight loss
- Running nose
- Sleep changes
- Mood changes
- Paranoia
- Decline in personal hygiene

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Chemical changes within the brain make quitting very difficult, though not impossible. A person may experience anhedonia, an inability to experience pleasure from things they once did. This mood change could last a long time, driving many individuals back to drug use.

The first step to quitting is detoxification. Because the physical withdrawal symptoms can last for a week, medical attention may be necessary. Inpatient or outpatient counseling is an integral next step, where participants must learn how to confront the problem and stay clean. Continuing care is recommended

through a 12-step program or similar support group.

If you or a loved one are unable to quit using cocaine or crack, see a doctor immediately. Risky behavior, such as unsafe sex, committing crimes, and sharing needles are sure signs help is needed.

ACTION STEPS

- ✓ **Be honest** - Once you are ready for help, be courageous and admit your behavior. It's tempting to downplay our dependence on something and our addictive behaviors. If a loved one struggles with addiction, express your concern openly and honestly.
- ✓ **Ask for help** - Unless you're honest with a professional, you can't get the help you really need. Talk to a doctor or counselor immediately about next steps.
- ✓ **Seek support** - Consider attending a 12-step group for continued support. If a family member uses cocaine or crack, consider attending Al-Anon or Nar-Anon meetings to find the support you need.

KEEP IN MIND

There is life beyond a cocaine or crack addiction. Ask your doctor to help you find the right support group that fits you.

What courageous steps might you, or the one you care for, take today to experience a full and healthy life?