

## Cocaine

### How does it make you feel?

Taking cocaine can make you feel:

- happy
- excited
- wide awake
- confident
- on top of your game

### How does it make people behave?

Cocaine affects people differently, but most users become:

- chattier
- more animated
- more confident

Some people become:

overconfident and arrogant  
agitated  
restless  
edgy

Cocaine can increase your sexual desires too, and some people take it to have more intense sex, but taking lots of cocaine can actually reduce your sex drive.

Generally speaking, a user's sex drive should go back to normal once they stop taking cocaine excessively.

### Physical health risks

- Cocaine is risky for anyone with high blood pressure or a heart condition, but even healthy young people can have a fit, heart attack or stroke after using the drug.
- The risk of overdose increases if you mix cocaine with other drugs or alcohol.
- Over time, snorting cocaine damages the cartilage in your nose that separates your nostrils. Heavy users can lose this cartilage and end up with one large nostril and a misshapen nose.
- Taking cocaine when pregnant can damage your baby, cause miscarriage, premature labour and low birth weight.
- Regularly smoking crack can cause breathing problems and pains in the chest.
- Injecting cocaine can damage veins and cause ulcers and gangrene. Sharing needles or other injecting equipment can spread HIV and hepatitis infections too. It's also easier to overdose from injecting cocaine.
- Speedballing (injecting a mixture of cocaine and heroin) can have fatal results. A form of heroin called white heroin, is easily mistaken for cocaine and people have died or been hospitalised after snorting it thinking it was cocaine.

### Mental health risks

Regular use of cocaine can make people feel:

- depressed
- run-down
- anxious
- paranoid

Cocaine can bring previous mental health problems to the surface too, and if a relative has had mental health problems, there might be an increased risk for you.

### Social risks

Frequent users find they begin to crave more of the drug – so it can become an expensive habit to keep up with.

### Can you get addicted?

Yes, cocaine is very addictive. This is because regular use changes the way the brain releases dopamine, a brain chemical that makes you feel happy.

- This is a Class A drug, which means it's illegal to have for yourself, give away or sell.
- Possession can get you up to 7 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both.
- Supplying someone else, even your friends, can get you life in prison, an unlimited fine or both.

Like drink-driving, driving when high is dangerous and illegal. If you're caught driving under the influence, you may receive a heavy fine, driving ban, or prison sentence.