

## Cocaine Fact Sheet

### Common Names:

- Cocaine (coke, C, snow, flake)
- Crack (rock)

### Description/Overview

Cocaine is a Central Nervous System (CNS) stimulant:

- Made from the South American coca bush
- Sold as a fine white powder (can be diluted with other substances such as cornstarch, sugar)
- Can be snorted, dissolved in water and injected into veins
- High lasts 30 – 45 minutes

Crack is chemically changed cocaine that can be smoked, or inhaled:

- It is more addictive due to its shorter half-life
- The rapid feeling of euphoria followed by a quick loss make it highly addictive

### Short-term Effects

- Rapid breathing and heart rate, dilated pupils and sweating
- Euphoric, energetic, alert, enhanced sociability, loss of appetite
- Empathy, paranoia,
- Increased sexual activity, stamina,
- Racing thoughts, followed by depression and low energy
- Larger doses can cause severe agitation, anxiety, erratic and violent behaviour, twitching, poor concentration, tremors, hallucinations, blurred vision, headaches, chest pains, rapid shallow breathing, muscle spasms, nausea, fever, convulsions and death

### Long – term Effects

- Mood swings, restlessness, extreme excitability, sleep disorders, impotence, constipation, eating disorders, weight loss, suspiciousness, and hallucinations and delusions
- Repeated use may cause long lasting problems with memory, attention and behaviour
- Sniffing cocaine can lead to stuffed, runny, chapped or bleeding noses, and holes in the nasal septum
- Risk of HIV and/or Hepatitis infection
- Using cocaine during pregnancy can cause miscarriage or premature birth, with multiple problems

### Dependence Potential

- Chronic use results in *tolerance* (the need to take more cocaine to feel the same effects)
- Can produce very powerful *psychological dependence*, leading to extremely compulsive patterns of abuse, and a constant craving for the drug
- Due to the chemical changes in dopamine caused by cocaine use; when cocaine use is stopped the dopamine levels are insufficient creating an inability to experience pleasure, and potentially leading to chronic/severe depression. This effect can last anywhere from 6 to 18 months.

### Withdrawal

- Fatigue or exhaustion, long but disturbed sleep,
- irritability and possible violence,
- loss of appetite for up to 2 weeks, followed by strong hunger
- Depression, possibly severe
- Insomnia, intense dreaming and irritability may last several weeks to several months