



COCAINE

Coca paste – basuco, cocaine, C, charlie, coke, dust, Gianlucca, gold dust, Percy, lady, snow, toot, white, crack – base, freebase, gravel, rock, stones, wash



Cocaine is a white powder derived from the leaves of the coca shrub, a plant that grows in South America.

It is usually split into lines and snorted up the nose though it may be swallowed or, rarely, made into an injectable solution with water.

Cocaine is a strong but short-acting stimulant drug that speeds up the body. It makes users feel energetic, confident, alert and strong.

Crack cocaine is an intense, short acting drug produced through a chemical process that produces peanut sized 'rocks'. Crack is usually smoked in a pipe, glass tube, plastic bottle or in foil. It often makes a cracking sound when heated.



The law

Cocaine and crack are both controlled as Class A drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act. It is illegal to be in possession of the drug or supply it. The maximum penalty for possession of cocaine/crack is 7 years imprisonment plus a fine. For supply and production, the maximum sentence is life imprisonment plus a fine. However, maximum sentences are unlikely to be given in practice.

Prevalence

According to Home Office statistics published in 2016, the most commonly used drug in the last year (after cannabis) among adults aged 16 to 59 in England and Wales was powder cocaine (2.2% in the 2015/16 survey, equating to around 725,000 people).



Risks and harm reduction



As cocaine is a stimulant, high doses increase heart rate and body temperature and can lead to heart problems including, rarely, heart attacks. Start low and go slow. Avoid mixing cocaine with other drugs, especially other stimulants or alcohol. Alcohol and cocaine combine to form a dangerous chemical called cocaethylene. Using cocaine a lot can make people feel tired, depressed and run down. At higher dose levels users may feel very anxious, panicky and paranoid.

With chronic use dependence, restlessness, hyperactivity, insomnia and weight loss may develop. Injecting is the most dangerous way to take drugs as it makes it much easier to overdose. Injecting is also associated with an increased risk of health problems like vein damage and infections like hepatitis or HIV. Clean needles should always be used.

As with all drugs it is best to be with others you know and trust if you plan to take cocaine.