

# TIPS for TEENS

## COCAINE

**SLANG:** TOOT/SNOW/  
C/COCA/BUMP/  
ROCK (CRACK)

## GET THE FACTS

**COCAINE AFFECTS YOUR BRAIN.** Cocaine causes a brief high that makes the user feel more energetic, talkative, and alert; this can be followed by feelings of restlessness, irritability, and panic.<sup>1</sup> Cocaine is highly addictive and can increase the risk of negative psychological states, including paranoia, anxiety, and psychosis.<sup>2,3</sup>

**COCAINE AFFECTS YOUR BODY.** People who use cocaine often don't eat or sleep regularly. They can experience increased heart rate, muscle spasms, and convulsions. Snorting cocaine also can permanently damage nasal tissue.<sup>4</sup>

**COCAINE AFFECTS YOUR EMOTIONS.** Using cocaine can change your mood and make you feel paranoid, angry, and anxious.<sup>5</sup>

**COCAINE IS ADDICTIVE.** Repeated cocaine use changes the brain circuits that process feelings of pleasure, which can cause a person to lose interest in other areas of their life, like school, friends, and sports.<sup>6</sup> It also damages brain circuits that control stress, decision-making, and impulse control, making it more difficult to stop using, even when it has negative effects on your life and health. Frequent use also can lead to tolerance and withdrawal, so you need more of the drug just to feel normal.<sup>7</sup>

**COCAINE CAN KILL YOU.** Cocaine use can cause seizures, strokes, and comas. Cocaine can change the way the heart beats and lead to a heart attack. People who share needles can contract hepatitis, HIV, and other diseases.<sup>8</sup> It also is particularly dangerous to consume cocaine and alcohol at the same time; they combine to produce a third chemical, cocaethylene, that is far more toxic than either cocaine or alcohol alone.<sup>9</sup>

**COCAINE ADDICTION IS TREATABLE.** Behavioral drug treatments can help someone stop using cocaine and recover from addiction.<sup>10</sup>



### Q. IS COCAINE USE A PROBLEM?

There were 1.9 million current (past-month) cocaine users ages 12 or older in 2015.<sup>11</sup> About 900,000 users ages 12 or older met the criteria for a diagnosable disorder with significant negative effects because of their cocaine use in the past year.<sup>12</sup> In 2014, overdoses and deaths caused by cocaine use increased by 42 percent.<sup>13</sup>

### Q. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COCAINE AND CRACK?

Crack, an altered form of cocaine, is a rock crystal that is usually smoked.<sup>14</sup> Cocaine can be snorted or dissolved in water and injected.

### Q. WHAT IS THE MOST DANGEROUS WAY TO USE COCAINE?

Snorting cocaine can result in frequent nosebleeds or loss of sense of smell. Injecting cocaine can cause infected sores at the injection sites or exposure to serious diseases such as HIV and hepatitis C by sharing needles. Using cocaine and alcohol at the same time is particularly dangerous. However, all methods of cocaine use can lead to severe cardiovascular, respiratory, and neurological effects.

Cocaine is illegal, addictive, and dangerous.<sup>16,17</sup> Talk to your parents, a doctor, a counselor, a teacher, or another adult you trust if you have questions.

Get the latest information on how drugs affect the brain and body at [teens.drugabuse.gov](http://teens.drugabuse.gov).

**SAMHSA**  
1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)  
(English and Español)

TTY 1-800-487-4889  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)  
[store.samhsa.gov](http://store.samhsa.gov)



**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration



# BEFORE YOU RISK IT!

1

**KNOW THE LAW.** Cocaine—in any form—is illegal.<sup>18</sup>

Even first-time cocaine use can be fatal.<sup>19</sup>

3

**KNOW THE RISKS.** Combining cocaine with other drugs or alcohol is extremely dangerous. The effects of one drug can magnify the effects of another, and mixing substances can be deadly.<sup>20</sup>

Cocaine impairs your judgment, which may lead to risky sexual behaviors. This can increase your risk for HIV/AIDS, other diseases, rape, and unplanned pregnancy.<sup>21</sup>

5

**LOOK AROUND YOU.** The majority of teens aren't using cocaine. In 2015, less than 1 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds reported ever using cocaine in their lifetime.<sup>22</sup>



## KNOW THE SIGNS

How can you tell if a friend is using cocaine?

It may not be easy to tell, but symptoms of cocaine use include:<sup>23,24,25</sup>

- Dilated pupils
- Restlessness and/or high energy
- Inability to sleep
- A runny nose and nosebleeds
- A hoarse voice
- Weight loss
- An increase in anxiety, depression, panic attacks, paranoia, or violent behavior
- Presence of inhaling paraphernalia, such as mirrors containing a white powder residue, razor blades, straws, small spoons, and rolled dollar bills

Encourage your friend to stop using or seek help from a parent, teacher, or other caring adult.

**For 24/7 free and confidential information and treatment referrals in English and Spanish, call SAMHSA's National Helpline at:**

or visit the SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator at

<sup>14,8,10,16,21,24</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2016). *Research report series: Cocaine*. Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/cocaine/what-cocaine>

<sup>2,7,18</sup> U.S. Department of Justice and Drug Enforcement Administration. (2015). *Drugs of abuse: A DEA resource guide*. Retrieved from [http://www.justice.gov/dea/pr/multimedia-library/publications/drug\\_of\\_abuse.pdf#page=45](http://www.justice.gov/dea/pr/multimedia-library/publications/drug_of_abuse.pdf#page=45)

<sup>3,7,23</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. (n.d.). Drug facts: Cocaine. *NIDA for Teens*. Retrieved from <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/cocaine>

<sup>5</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. (n.d.). Signs of cocaine abuse and addiction. *Easy-to-Read Drug Facts*. Retrieved from <https://easyread.drugabuse.gov/content/signs-cocaine-use-and-addiction>

<sup>6</sup> Partnership for Drug-Free Kids. (n.d.). Look for warning signs. *Partnership for Drug-Free Kids*. Retrieved from <http://www.drugfree.org/think-child-using/look-for-signs-and-symptoms>

<sup>9</sup> Pennings, E. J., Leccese, A. P., & Wolff, F. A. (2002). Effects of concurrent use of alcohol and cocaine. *Addiction*, 97, 773-783. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12133112>.

<sup>11,22</sup> Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2016). *Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed tables*. Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-DeTabs-2015/NSDUH-DeTabs-2015/NSDUH-DeTabs-2015.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2016). *Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. (HHS Publication No. SMA 16-4984, NSDUH Series H-51). Retrieved from <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFRI-2015/NSDUH-FFRI-2015/NSDUH-FFRI-2015.htm>

<sup>13</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2015). *Overdose death rates*. Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates> and [https://www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/overdose\\_data1999-2014.xls](https://www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/overdose_data1999-2014.xls)

<sup>14,19,20</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2016). *Drug facts: Cocaine*. Retrieved from <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/cocaine>

<sup>15</sup> Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. (2006). Session 4: Methamphetamine and cocaine. *Matrix Intensive Outpatient Treatment for People with Stimulant Use Disorders: Counselor's Family Education Manual*. Retrieved from <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Matrix-Intensive-Outpatient-Treatment-for-People-with-Stimulant-Use-Disorders-Counselor-s-Family-Education-Manual-w-CD/SMA13-4153>

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency. (2017). How to identify drug paraphernalia. *Get Smart About Drugs*. Retrieved from <https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/content/how-identify-drug-paraphernalia>

## MORE INFORMATION



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR FOR RESOURCES USED IN THIS "TIPS for TEENS," visit [store.samhsa.gov](http://store.samhsa.gov) or call 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) (English and Español). PEP NO. 18-01 REVISED 2018