

# Cocaine Addiction & Treatment

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## What Is Cocaine?

Cocaine, commonly referred to as coke, is an [illegal stimulant drug](#) that has extremely addictive properties. More specifically, it is classified as a **CNS (central nervous system) stimulant** and a local anesthetic.

Using coke results in alertness, heightened energy, intense feelings of happiness, and in some cases, anxiety.

The drug is derived from the leaves of the cocoa plant, which is a native South American plant. Coke comes in the form of a white crystal powder that is typically snorted, inhaled, or dissolved and injected. [Crack](#), the freebase form of cocaine, is generally smoked.

Other street names include:

- Blow

- Crack (freebase form)
- Snow
- C
- Rock
- Powder

**A study from 2014 found about 1.5 million people (12 and older) were past-month cocaine users. This is about 0.6 percent of the U.S. population National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)**

### **Why Is Cocaine Addictive?**

Cocaine is one of the most addictive substances in the world. In fact, it is considered a **Schedule II drug**, which means it has a high potential for abuse. Depending on the person and reason for use, cocaine disorders can range from mild, moderate, to severe.

The more an individual uses, the more at risk they are of developing an addiction.

This is because, over time, a person has to keep increasing their cocaine dose to achieve the same high. The substance also changes your brain chemistry and shrinks brain cells, which can result in cocaine addiction over time.

Small doses of the drug can be used as a local anesthetic for severe medical conditions, but only if it is administered by a doctor. Although, with the development of synthetic local anesthetics, using cocaine for medical purposes is rare in the U.S. It is also illegal to sell as a street drug because of its highly addictive nature and harmful effects.

**[Find Help For Your Addiction](#)**

You don't have to overcome your addiction alone. Professional guidance

and support is available. Begin a life of recovery by reaching out to a

specialist today.

## **Symptoms of Abuse & Addiction**

The symptoms of a stimulant use disorder, or cocaine use disorder, are often difficult to recognize. Since many people abuse the drug at parties or social events, they may not know they are addicted. Although, if an individual has built up a tolerance to the drug and experiences withdrawal symptoms after stopping use, a dependency has developed.

Other possible symptoms of cocaine abuse include:

- Decreased appetite
- Losing weight quickly
- [Frequent nosebleeds](#)
- Headaches or migraines
- Sensitivity to sound, sight, and touch
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities
  - Changes in eating and sleeping patterns

- Participating in risky behaviors
- Isolation from other people
- Money difficulties or stealing money
- Poor hygiene
- Weak immune system (getting sick often)

If you or a loved one experiences any of the following symptoms, you may be at risk of addiction:

- Uncontrollable cravings for the substance
- Not wanting to use the drug, but doing so anyway
- Ignoring the possible consequences and risk factors

**Between 2018 and 2019, about 69,000 people died of a drug overdose. [Cocaine overdoses](#) made up 23 percent (more than 1 in 5) of these deaths.**  
**NCHS**

### **Long-Term Side Effects of Abuse**

After snorting, inhaling, or injecting coke, people often feel the effects immediately. Depending on the dose, these effects fade after a few minutes to an hour. As a result, many people take high doses or multiple doses closely together to maintain the “high.”

Possible severe and long-term side effects of abuse include:

- Drastic changes in mood, such as extreme excitability followed by depression after the high wears off
- Risk of health complications, such as heart disease, stroke, heart attacks, seizures, lung damage, Hepatitis C, and HIV (if injecting)
- Irritability, anxiety, and paranoia, which can result in a mental health disorder

- Loss of smell and trouble swallowing
- Permanent changes to brain chemistry and thought process

## **Cocaine Withdrawal**

Those addicted to cocaine—who suddenly stop using it—will experience an initial crash (known as **withdrawal**). Cocaine withdrawal can be intense and challenging due to cravings and uncomfortable side effects.

Effects of cocaine withdrawal include:

- Fatigue
- Hostility
- Paranoia
- Anxiety
- Agitation
- Sleep issues
- Depression

Cocaine withdrawal can cause intense discomfort. This can cause strong feelings to take the drug again. Even when cocaine withdrawal symptoms have lessened, sudden cravings are common.

**Support systems** (including friends, family, treatment centers, and other people recovering from addiction) can [help you](#) through this phase.

**Don't Let Addiction Control You.**

You can overcome any struggle – including your substance abuse problem -

if you have the right help from qualified professionals. Give yourself the

freedom of recovery by turning things around today.

## **Drug Interactions: Cocaine, Alcohol, and Heroin**

[Alcohol](#) and cocaine are commonly used together, which is a dangerous combination. Additionally, if you are recovering from a stimulant use disorder, drinking alcohol may trigger cocaine use.

Lastly, some addicts also mix [heroin](#) and coke (known as a “[speedball](#)”), which is an extremely deadly combination when injected. So, it is important to abstain from all drugs and alcohol during the treatment and recovery phases.

## **Risk Factors of “Street” Cocaine**

Drug dealers commonly dilute (cut) street cocaine with other substances. They do so to increase profits, but the consequences of “cutting” coke can be deadly.

Common substances used to dilute the drug may include:

- Cornstarch
- Talcum powder
- Flour

- Baking soda
- Other drugs, such as fentanyl or another stimulant (amphetamine).

## Treatment for Cocaine Addiction

Pharmacological and behavioral treatments are the most effective options for cocaine addiction. More specifically, you may benefit from outpatient treatment, [inpatient treatment](#), medications, behavioral therapy, or a combination.

For example, common medications used to treat cocaine addiction may include:

- **Propranolol** — a beta-blocker that may help some patients struggling with severe symptoms of [cocaine withdrawal](#).
- **Disulfiram** — a medication used to treat those with alcohol dependence. Recent research shows it may also reduce a patient's risk for cocaine relapse.
- **Baclofen** — a muscle relaxant that reduces the amount of dopamine released in the body. This drug can help decrease cocaine cravings and prevent relapse.
- **Tiagabine** — this drug is currently approved to treat seizures. Similar to Baclofen, it has also been shown to improve cocaine abstinence and prevent relapse.

Since cocaine rewires your brain with continued use, it is challenging to quit using the drug without professional treatment. Find treatment today.

### What's Next?

- [What Is Rehab Like?](#)
- [Why Call an Addiction Hotline?](#)
- [How to Sober Up](#)
- [Tapering off of alcohol](#)
- [What is Considered an Alcoholic?](#)

## Resources

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