

# Cocaine misuse

Information and advice for patients who have or are currently using cocaine

## Drug and Alcohol Care Team

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### Understanding Your Symptoms

You are having symptoms that may be caused by using cocaine. Cocaine is sometimes called "Coke," "Blow," or "Snow."

This leaflet will tell you:

- What cocaine is
- What it can do to your body and mind
- Where you can get help

### What is cocaine?

Cocaine is a drug that makes the body speed up. It comes from a plant called the coca plant. People can use it in different ways, such as snorting it, smoking it, swallowing it, or injecting it.

### What happens when someone uses cocaine?

Cocaine speeds up how the brain and body work. It can make someone:

- Feel very happy
- Feel full of energy
- Feel very awake
- Feel very alert

### Is cocaine illegal?

Yes. Cocaine is controlled as a Class A substance under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. If you are found carrying cocaine you can face a prison sentence of up to 7 years, and/or an unlimited fine. Those found to be supplying cocaine can face life in prison, and/or an unlimited fine.

### Why stop using cocaine and what are the health risks?

Taking drugs of any kind can be really dangerous. Here are some of the ways cocaine can harm you:

**Your heart:** Cocaine makes your heart beat faster and harder, which can cause a heart attack.

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**Your brain:** It can cause really bad headaches, and can even cause a stroke, where blood flow to the brain gets blocked or a blood vessel bursts.

**Your feelings:** It can make you feel very worried, scared, jumpy, and irritable - even when there's nothing to be scared of.

**Overdose:** Taking too much can cause your heart to stop completely, which can kill you.

**Your nose:** Snorting cocaine can damage the inside of your nose over time, making a hole in the wall between your nostrils.

**Addiction:** Your body can get used to it, meaning you need to keep taking more and more to feel the same effect. This is called addiction, and it's very hard to stop.

**Money problems:** Cocaine is expensive. People who become addicted often spend all their money on it and can end up in serious debt.

**Relationships:** It can damage friendships and family bonds. People may stop trusting you, arguments become more common, and you might start ignoring the people and things that matter most to you.

## **How to stay safe**

We would strongly advise completely stopping use of cocaine to prevent further damage to your body. However, if you do choose to continue to use cocaine, there are ways to reduce some of the risks and harms.

- Start with the lowest dose.
- Do not mix with alcohol or other substances.
- Avoid sharing snorting straws to reduce disease transmission.
- Seek immediate help if you think you are at risk of harm.

## **Further help**

If you feel that you need further support with your cocaine use, here are some other services that may be able to support you:

### **For Sandwell residents**

**Cranstoun Community drug and alcohol services**

[www.cranstoun.org](http://www.cranstoun.org)

0121 553 1333

### **For Birmingham residents**

**CGL community drug and alcohol services**

[www.changegrowlive.org](http://www.changegrowlive.org)

0121 227 5890

### **Re-Solv**

Text or whatsapp Re-Solv with any questions on 07496 959930 or phone in confidence on 01785817885 from 10am – 4pm, Monday – Friday. There's more online at [re-solv.org](http://re-solv.org).

## **Frank**

At [talktofrank.com](http://talktofrank.com) you can search for information on every drug and there's a confidential phone helpline on 0300 123 6600, text 82111 and live chat.

## **Mind**

If you have concerns about your mental health, you can call Mind on 0300 123 3393, text 86463 or visit [mind.org.uk](http://mind.org.uk).

## **The Mix**

The Mix provides free, confidential information and support for under-25s on 0808 808 4994 and at [themix.org.uk](http://themix.org.uk).

**Cocaine anonymous  
helpline@cauk.org.uk**

0800 612 0225

[www.cocaineanonymous.org.uk](http://www.cocaineanonymous.org.uk)

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