

For further information:

Drugaid

Tel: 0870 060 0310

0870 numbers are more expensive from a mobile. 0870 numbers are cheaper from a landline.

Tel: 02920 868 675

Tel: 01685 721 991

www.drugaidcymru.com

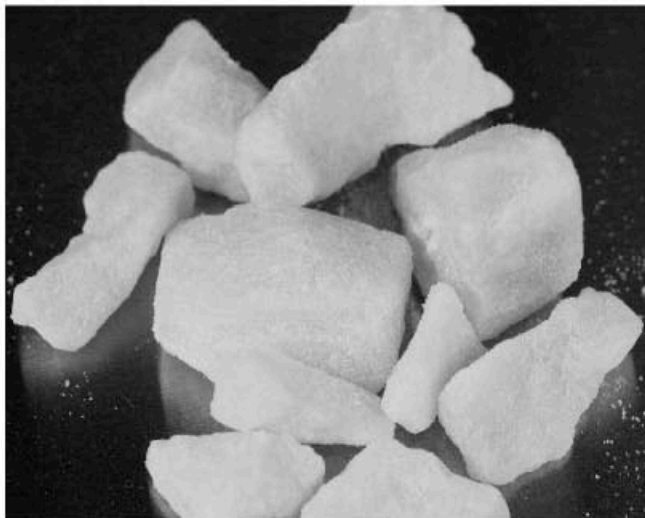


Crack Cocaine

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Rocks, stones, freebase or base

What does it look like?



What is crack cocaine?

Crack is cocaine hydrochloride (cocaine powder) that has been chemically altered to form crystals so that it can be smoked either on foil, in a pipe or glass tube. The rocks are heated until they evaporate and the resulting smoke is inhaled. Crack gets its name because it crackles when it is heated and smoked.

What will it do to me?

Crack is a stimulant drug which means that it speeds up the heart, breathing and brain activity, constricts blood vessels and floods the body with 'feel good' chemicals including adrenaline, dopamine and serotonin. Crack gives an instant and very intense 'high' or 'rush' producing feelings of euphoria, exhilaration, increased confidence and hyper-alertness. Other reported effects are increased physical strength and sexual arousal (the risk of engaging in risky sexual practices is heightened by crack use). The 'high' is very short-lived (about 10 minutes). As intense as the high produced, crack also produces a very strong 'crash' or 'low' after using. Use can get quickly out of control when people chase the initial high and try to avoid experiencing the 'crash' – this leads to very compulsive and heavy use. People do not become physically dependent on crack but often develop severe psychological dependence. Prolonged and heavy use can lead to serious mental disturbances such as depression, anxiety, agitation, paranoia and psychosis. People's behaviour can become erratic and unpredictable, and often aggressive or violent. Crack can also lead to serious physical problems such as lung damage, irregular heartbeat and even heart failure.

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When does it become a problem?

- Using crack can quickly lead to you neglecting physical needs such as sleep and eating and poor personal hygiene.
- Psychological or emotional problems might include constant low moods and depression, mood swings, increased aggression. You may experience social isolation and experience feelings of paranoia and anxiety which can result in being unable to cope with social situations.
- Nothing is as important as crack and life seems to have no meaning without it – it occupies a lot of your time either doing it or thinking about doing it. Amount and frequency of use are increasing. You need more and more to get the same effect.
- Change in friends - making new friends who do it and neglecting old friends who don't.
- Neglect of family or work responsibilities – letting people down or being late for or missing work or college.
- Spending more money than you have on it which can lead to debt and selling of personal property.

Staying safer

- Put off the first pipe of the day.
- Try and make crack use occasional, not a daily habit.
- Try to smoke in quiet surroundings – the crash is less severe.
- Don't go out and score with lots of money on you – decide how much you are going to use and stick to it.
- Don't buy less than you need – you will end up craving and then using even more.
- Remember, the worst of the crash will only last for half an hour – try not to keep using to avoid it – doing this only makes it much worse when it eventually happens.

- Try chasing crack on foil – the buzz is milder but the feeling lasts longer and the crash is milder.
- Remember – no-one is completely powerless against crack. Decide on some rules and stick to them... pace the pipes, don't rush to smoke the next, smoke several small pipes instead of one big one.
- Go to bed straight after finishing a session.

Staying Away Tips

- Thought switching – when you start to think about using crack, try to switch your thinking. Remind yourself of the reasons you are having a break or trying to stop.
- Remove dealer's numbers off your phone.
- Find other things to do to occupy your time – feeling bored will leave you thinking about using even more. Get in touch with Drugaid to find out about diversionary activities.
- Try and spend time with non-using friends.
- Taking physical exercise can really help – it boosts 'feel good' chemicals such as serotonin.
- Give yourself a non-drug 'reward' for staying away from crack cocaine.
- Cravings and urges do get weaker over time and the sense of control gets greater.

The Law –

Under the Misuse of Drugs Act, 1971 crack is a Class A drug:

Penalties

- Possession:** up to 7 years imprisonment and/or fine.
Supply: up to life imprisonment and/or fine.