

RANDOX

TESTING SERVICES

Effects of Cocaine on the Human Body

Cocaine is a powerful and highly addictive substance. Cocaine remains a schedule II controlled substance, and can be found in a number of forms, including white powder, paste, or solidified and rock-like. This poster will outline the various effects of cocaine on different parts of the body.

Some General Side Effects of Cocaine are:

- Tremors, muscle twitches or tics, paranoia, vertigo, constricted blood vessels, dilated pupils, increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, increased body temperature and decreased sexual function.
- Taking cocaine when pregnant can damage your baby. It may cause miscarriage, premature labour and low birth weight.
- Using cocaine can also lead to movement disorders, including Parkinson's disease, which may also occur after many years of cocaine use.

Effects of Cocaine on the Brain

- One of cocaine's effects in the brain is to increase dopamine release. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that plays a role in the brain registering positive feelings, and 'rewarding' the behaviours that led to those feelings to begin with.
- Small amounts of cocaine usually make a user feel euphoric, energetic, talkative, mentally alert, and hypersensitive to sight, sound and touch. The drug also decreases the need for food and sleep.
- Intracerebral hemorrhage, or bleeding within the brain, and balloon like bulges in the walls of cerebral blood vessels have also been linked to sustained cocaine use.

Effects of Cocaine on Muscle

- One potentially fatal condition documented among cocaine users is rhabdomyolysis. This is a condition in which muscle fibres are being rapidly broken down, resulting in a flood of muscle fibres entering the bloodstream. This can potentially result in kidney failure and ultimately death if not treated soon enough.
- With pronounced and prolonged abuse, users can develop lack of muscle control and other unpleasant muscle problems.

Effects of Cocaine on the digestive system

- People who ingest cocaine might experience less blood flow to the digestive system, resulting in bowel gangrene.
- Cocaine reduces blood flow in the gastrointestinal tract, which can lead to tears and ulcerations.

Effects of Cocaine on the Nose

- Over time, snorting cocaine will seriously damage the cartilage in your nose that separates the nostrils; and it is not unknown for heavy users to lose their cartilage and end up with just one really big nostril and a mis-shapen nose.

Effects of Cocaine on the Heart

- Many cocaine users also use alcohol, and this combination can be particularly dangerous. The two substances react to produce cocaethylene, which may potentiate the toxic effects of cocaine and alcohol on the heart.
- Chest pain that feels like a heart attack is common and sends many cocaine users to casualty.
- Cocaine use is linked with increased risk of stroke, as well as inflammation of the heart muscle, deterioration of the heart to contract, and aortic ruptures.
- Many chronic cocaine users lose their appetite and experience significant and well-recognised toxic effects on the heart and cardiovascular system.

Effects of injecting Cocaine

Those who choose to inject cocaine run all the risks associated with injecting, which include:

- Puncture scars
- Infections
- Allergic reactions
- Contraction of diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C

