COCAINE

WHAT IS IT?

Cocaine is a powerfully addictive stimulant drug made from the leaves of the coca plant. Cocaine increases levels of dopamine in brain circuits controlling pleasure and movement. This flood of dopamine ultimately disrupts normal brain communication and causes cocaine's high. The build-up of dopamine causes the euphoric effects commonly reported by cocaine users, including hyperstimulation, reduced fatigue, and mental clarity. Dealers "cut" cocaine with many products; some of which, such as caffeine or Sudafed, mimic the effects of cocaine. The duration of effects of cocaine depends on the delivery method and purity of the dose. As a result, individuals may take cocaine more frequently and in larger amounts which results in high potential for overdose and addiction.

COCAINE AND ALCOHOL

Because of the stimulant effects of cocaine, users drink more than they are accustomed to without feeling the depressant effects of alcohol. Cocaine, however, wears off much more rapidly, leaving the individual more intoxicated than they thought they were, contributing to a heightened chance of experiencing alcohol's negative consequences. Alcohol and cocaine also combine in the liver to create a third substance, cocaethylene, which increases the strain on the heart and the risk of sudden death.

Health Promotion
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

SHORT TERM EFFECTS

- Extreme happiness and energy
- Mental alertness
- Hypersensitivity to sight, sound, and touch
- Irritability and paranoia
- Sense of power and confidence
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Constricted blood vessels
- Increased temperature
- Dilated pupils
- Decreased appetite
- Impotence
- Restlessness and insomnia
- Sudden death—even one use can cause overdose
- Depression—when coming down from a cocaine high

LONG TERM EFFECTS

- Cardiovascular problems, including irregular heartbeat, heart attack, and heart failure
- Sleeplessness or sexual dysfunction
- Diminished sense of smell or perforated nasal septum
- Nausea and headaches
- Malnourishment
- Neurological incidents, including strokes, seizures, fungal brain infections, and hemorrhaging in tissue surrounding the brain
- Pulmonary effects, such as fluid in the lungs, aggravation of asthma and other lung disorders, and respiratory failure
- Psychiatric complications, including psychosis, paranoia, depression, anxiety disorders, and delusions
- Increased risk of traumatic injury from accidents and aggressive, violent, or criminal behavior
- For intravenous (IV) cocaine users, there is increased risk of hepatitis, HIV infection, and endocarditis.
- For users already infected with HIV or hepatitis, cocaine use lowers immune function, allowing the infection to progress more rapidly.