

Crack Encyclopedia Article

Crack

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Crack

Crack (sometimes called crack cocaine) is the form of cocaine that is smoked. The white powder that people buy illegally as cocaine cannot be smoked, because it is destroyed at the temperatures required for smoking. Cocaine can be converted to crack by adding an **alkaline**, then heating the mixture, resulting in a pellet-sized, cakelike solid substance that can be smoked. Crack takes its name from the cracks formed in the solid as it dries. This form of cocaine is less expensive than powder cocaine and is available for purchase on the street.

Smoking cocaine began with the use of a preparation of cocaine called freebase. Soon after this form of cocaine became popular, single doses of crack cocaine already prepared for smoking became available through the illegal drug market. Although crack can be smoked in tobacco cigarettes or marijuana cigarettes, it is generally smoked in a special crack pipe.

Users adopted the smoking method of taking cocaine because smoking delivers the drug's effects quickly. Blood levels of cocaine peak rapidly when the drug is smoked, producing the cocaine "rush." The speed and duration of the effects are comparable to taking the drug by injection. Users of crack prefer smoking because it does not require the paraphernalia—syringes, needles, and so on—needed for injecting drugs.

Crack is an extremely dangerous substance because of its **toxicity**. Also, crack is dangerous because it is easy to use and available in single doses to almost anyone because of its relatively low price. The easier a drug is to obtain and the more rapidly it takes effect, the more likely it is that the drug will be abused.

See Also

Cocaine; Street Value.