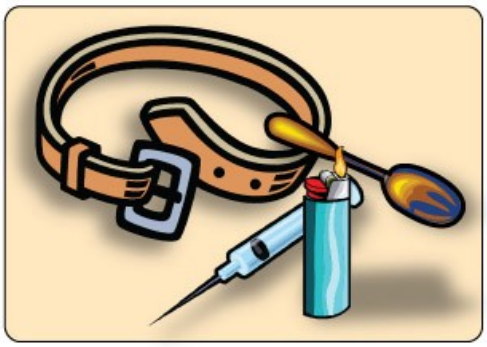
Chemical Dependency and Cocaine Abuse

WHEN IS DRUG USE A PROBLEM?

Anytime drug use is interfering with normal living activities it has become abuse. This includes problems with family and friends. Psychological dependence has developed when your mind tells you that the drug is needed. This is usually followed by physical dependence which has developed when continuing increases of drug are required to get the same feeling or "high". This is known as **addiction** or **chemical dependency**. A person's risk is much higher if there is a history of chemical dependency in the family.

SIGNS OF CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY:

- Been told by friends or family that drugs have become a problem
- Fighting when using drugs
- Having blackouts (not remembering what you do while using).
- Feel sick from using drugs but continue using
- Lie about use or amounts of drugs (chemicals) used.
- Need chemicals to get you going.
- Suffer in work performance or school because of drug use.
- Get sick from use of drugs but continue to use anyway.
- Need drugs to relate to people or feel comfortable in social situations.
- Use drugs to forget problems.



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Yes answered to any of the above signs of chemical dependency indicates there are problems. The **longer the use** of drugs continues, the **greater the problems** will become.

If there is a family history of drug or alcohol use it is **best not to experiment** with these drugs. Experimentation **leads to tolerance** and needing to use more of the drug to get the same feeling. This is **followed by addiction** where drugs become the most important part of life. It becomes more important to take drugs than participate in the other usual activities of life including relating to friends and family. **Addiction is followed by dependency** where drugs are now needed not just to get high but to feel normal.

Addiction cannot be cured but it can be stopped. This often requires outside help and the care of professionals. Treatment centers are listed in the yellow pages under: Cocaine, Narcotics, and Alcoholics Anonymous. Most hospitals and clinics can refer you to a specialized care center.

WHAT IS COCAINE?

Cocaine is a strong nervous system **stimulant** which speeds up the body and gives the user the feeling that they have increased energy, loss of appetite and feelings of great pleasure. This **"high"** which begins within several minutes and lasts for less than an hour is **followed by a "crash"**. The crash and depressed feelings that come with it cause a craving for the drug to regain the high.

HOW IS COCANINE USED?

Cocaine is snorted, injected, and smoked as free- base or crack. Because smoking the drug produces a greater high it is also associated with a greater low. It is therefore more rapidly addicting.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF COCAINE?

It is an *anesthetic* (pain killer) and a *stimulant* (it causes a high which gives a false feeling of well being). It increases heart and breathing rates with increases in body temperature and blood pressure. It removes appetite. It causes *seizures* (convulsions) along with *nausea* (feeling sick to your stomach), vomiting and stomach pain. This dangerous combination can lead to death. Trying to keep the high feeling leads to greater and greater drug

use and this leads to addiction.

Addiction can only be helped by stopping use of all chemicals. This is **hard but may save your life**. If the addiction is continued, the only possible outcome is loss of self respect and self esteem, violence, death, and eventually prison if the addict is fortunate enough to be caught and able to receive help prior to this last life ending event.

OTHER HEALTH RISKS OF COCAINE AND ALL DRUG USE ARE:

- The increased possibility of getting AIDS or hepatitis (liver inflammation).
- Having a baby born which is addicted to cocaine and must go through painful withdrawal including shaking, jerking, and crying in pain. Many of the babies die. Other babies go through life with lifelong disabilities and learning problems.

HOW TO STAY DRUG FREE ONCE YOU HAVE QUIT USING:

- Develop healthy activities and form friends who do not use drugs.
- Stay away from the drug scene.
- Tell the pusher or former friend you have other better things to do.
- Have ready excuses available about why you cannot use.

FOR MORE HELP OR INFORMATION CONTACT YOUR LOCAL PHYSICIAN, CLINIC, HOSPITAL OR DIAL 1-800-COCAINE (1-800-262-2463).

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