

It won't happen to me.



Nobody who becomes a crack addict ever thought they would. But crack can very quickly get a hold of you.

Crack cocaine is one of the most addictive drugs of all. Because the high is so short-lived, minutes after taking it users start to feel depressed. And when they start to feel depressed, they want to take more. This makes crack an impossible drug to control.

The cravings can be overwhelming. Crack addicts will do anything to feed their habit, which usually means crime, stealing from family and friends, and the communities they live in.

It will happen to me.



What is crack?

Crack is a stimulant.

It is a type of cocaine made into small lumps or rocks that can be smoked.

What do people call it?

Crack is also called base, freebase, gravel, rocks, stones, pebbles and wash. It's called crack because of the sound it makes when burnt.

What does it look like?

A rock of crack is white and about the size of a raisin.

How is it taken?

Crack is usually smoked in a pipe, glass tube, plastic bottle or in foil. This is called freebasing. But it can be injected.

What does it cost?

A rock costs between £12 and £20, although it's sometimes sold cheaper by the slice or as a 'clubbing rock' for about £10.

Because the effects wear off so quickly, crack is expensive. And because it's expensive, crack addicts often turn to crime to fund their habit.

What are the effects of crack?

Crack has similar short-lived effects to cocaine, but is much stronger.

Crack users feel confident and wide awake. But the high can come with hallucinations, huge mood swings and massive paranoia. And some people get aggressive or violent.

Soon after taking it, users experience a crash. This makes you feel sick, tired and depressed.

Heavy users often feel sick, have trouble sleeping and lose sexual desire.

How long do the effects last?

The effects are immediate, peaking for about two minutes and lasting about 10 minutes.

After the high comes a long, low crash, and a massive craving for more.

Is crack addictive?

It's extremely addictive.

Regular users can quickly become physically and psychologically dependent. This is very difficult to control.

What are the risks of overdosing?

Crack users have died from overdosing.

High doses can raise the body's temperature, and cause convulsions and breathing difficulties. The risk is increased if crack is mixed with heroin, barbiturates or alcohol.

Injecting a mixture of cocaine and heroin, called a 'speedball', is one of the most dangerous cocktails you can put in your body.

Very large doses can cause death from heart or breathing problems, but this is rare.

What are the risks from injecting?

Injecting crack can damage your veins and lead to ulcers and gangrene.

You can also catch HIV or AIDS and hepatitis from dirty or shared needles. And it's easier to overdose if you inject.

What are the other risks?

Taking crack when you're pregnant harms your baby. Babies can become addicted too, and suffer withdrawal symptoms after birth.

Using crack regularly can bring on a seizure or a fit. It can also cause convulsions, chest pain and sudden death from heart attack or stroke.

People who use crack often develop serious problems with anxiety, paranoia and panic attacks. If you've had previous mental-health problems, crack could bring them to the surface again.

What is the law about crack?

Crack cocaine is a Class-A drug.

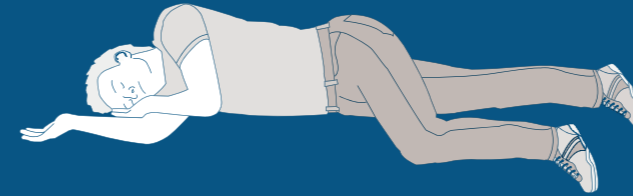
Possession can lead to seven years in prison. Supplying to someone else, including your friends, can get you life in prison and an unlimited fine.

First Aid

Call 999.

Tell the medical staff immediately if someone has taken drugs. This could save their life.

If someone is unconscious, put them in the recovery position.



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Getting more information

Phone the free and confidential 'Know the Score' information line to speak to a trained advisor.

Someone is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Calls from landlines are free and will not show up on your phone bill.

Call 0800 587 587 9.

You can also visit the 'Know the Score' website for help and information.

This website has links to Scotland's drug agencies.

www.knowthescore.info

Both the information line and the website can provide information about local services.

You can also ask your GP to refer you to a specialist drugs service.

