

Police: Crack Cocaine



Crack cocaine, another form of cocaine base, also is derived from powder cocaine. Unlike the processing of freebase cocaine, converting powder cocaine into crack cocaine does not involve any flammable solvents. The powder cocaine is simply dissolved in a solution of sodium bicarbonate and water. The solution is boiled and a solid substance separates from the boiling mixture. This solid substance, crack cocaine, is removed and allowed to dry. The crack cocaine is then broken or cut into "rocks," each typically weighing from one-tenth to one-half a gram. One gram of pure powder cocaine will convert to approximately 0.89 grams of crack cocaine. The Drug Enforcement Administration estimates that crack rocks are between 75 and 90 percent pure cocaine.

Cocaine base (including coca paste, freebase cocaine, and crack cocaine) typically is smoked in pipes constructed of glass bowls fitted with one or more fine mesh screens that support the drug. The user heats the side of the bowl (usually with a lighter), and the heat causes the cocaine base to vaporize. The user inhales the cocaine-laden fumes through the pipe. Alternatively, crack cocaine can be sprinkled in cigarettes and smoked.

Smoking cocaine combines the efficiency of intravenous administration with the relative ease of consumption or ingestion and insufflation. Facilitated by the large surface area

of the lungs' air sacs, cocaine administered by inhalation is absorbed almost immediately into the bloodstream, taking only 19 seconds to reach the brain. However, only 30 to 60 percent of the available dose is absorbed due to incomplete inhalation of the cocaine-laden fumes and variations in the heating temperature.

Cocaine smokers achieve maximum physiological effects approximately two minutes after inhalation. Maximum psychotropic effects are attained approximately one minute after inhalation. Similar to intravenous administration, the physiological and psychotropic effects of inhaled cocaine are sustained for approximately 30 minutes after peak effects are attained.