

Police: Cocaine



Cocaine is a naturally occurring substance derived from the leaves of erythroxylon plants indigenous to South America. Pharmacologically, cocaine has two prominent actions: 1) it is a potent anesthetic; and 2) it is a powerful stimulant.

Cocaine has been used in South America for more than 3,000 years and in the United States since the 19th century in a variety of forms: coca leaves, coca paste, powder cocaine, and cocaine base (e.g., freebase and crack cocaine). The final form of cocaine dictates how the drug can be administered and, as a consequence, the intensity and duration of its physiological and psychotropic effects. For example, to be effective, powder cocaine can be injected, insufflated (snorted), or ingested, while crack cocaine can only be smoked. Therefore, while powder cocaine users can administer the drug in a variety of ways, crack cocaine users are limited to smoking the drug.