

What it looks like

A rock of crack can be white or an off-white yellowy colour. It looks waxy and comes in different sizes.

How it's taken

Crack should be taken in a pipe, a glass tube, a plastic bottle, in foil, or smoked as a joint. It can also be injected.

What it does

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

Crack users can feel more confident and wide awake.

The high can come with hallucinations, mood swings and paranoia, and some people may become aggressive or violent.

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

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

Addiction

It's highly addictive. Regular users can quickly become physically and psychologically dependent. This is very difficult to control.



How long the effects last

The effects are immediate, peaking for about two minutes and lasting about 10 minutes. The high can be followed by a long 'low' and massive craving for more crack.

The Risks

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. It puts a huge strain on the heart and should be avoided.

Very large doses can cause death from heart or breathing problems.

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 easy to overdose if you inject.

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 also causes convulsions, chest pains and sudden death from heart attacks or stroke.

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

What to do in an emergency

Don't delay – Call 999 immediately.

If you think someone has overdosed on drugs, tell the operator what drugs they've taken (if you know).

What not to do:

- Don't cause pain or another injury.
- Don't give them other drugs.
- Don't put them in a shower or bath.
- Don't walk them around.
- Don't leave them on their own.

Always follow the operator's instructions.

And remember, if you have any doubt always call 999. It could save the person's life.

What the law says

Crack is a classified drug.

For the current classification and information about the consequences of using or supplying crack, go to www.knowthescore.info

Fact: by law, passing drugs to someone else, including friends, is classed as supplying.

Fact: some countries may refuse visas to people who have drug convictions.

Getting More Information

Phone the free and confidential 'Know the Score' information line on **0800 587 5879** 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 the phone bill. Or, you can visit the Know the Score website at www.knowthescore.info

Both the information line and the website can provide information about local services. Also, you can ask your GP to refer you to a specialist drugs service. To find a drug service in your area log on to www.scottishdrugservices.com

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