

Spotting Signs of Cocaine Abuse

Q. I'm afraid that my grandson may be using cocaine. Is there any way I can tell for sure? And how dangerous is this drug?

This is a topic that is unusual for The Healthy Geezer. It's not about a senior health issue, but it does affect seniors. Many of us are grandparents who worry about the drug culture of our grandchildren. We also wonder if there's anything we can do to prevent kids from getting into a drug habit. Well, the first step we can take is to educate ourselves. That's what this column is about. Cocaine, the strongest natural stimulant, is an addictive drug; you can be hooked with a single use. It causes a short-lived high that is immediately followed by depression, edginess, and a craving for more of the drug. Cocaine interferes with the way your brain creates feelings of pleasure, so you need more of the drug to feel normal. Cocaine is extracted from the leaves of the coca plant. It is a drug that comes in the form of a white powder that is snorted. It can be converted to a liquid form for injection. Crack is cocaine processed into a crystal form for smoking. Crack, also called "rock," looks like small chunks of soap. Cocaine, in any form, is illegal. It is the most frequently mentioned illicit substance reported to the Drug Abuse Warning Network by hospital emergency departments throughout the nation. Cocaine is lethal. It can cause strokes, heart attacks and respiratory failure. In addition, it can cause irregular heartbeat, depression, violent actions, and loss of sexual function. According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the following are the signs that someone may be addicted to cocaine:

- Periods of severe depression
- Weight loss
- Decline in personal hygiene or appearance
- Constant runny nose
- Frequent upper respiratory infections
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Loss of interest in friends, family, and social activities
- Loss of interest in food, sex, or other pleasures
- Hearing voices when nobody has spoken, or feeling paranoid
- Expressing more anger, becoming more impatient or nervous
- Hallucinations

And here are some more I collected from other sources:

- Frequently need for money
- Intense euphoria
- Bloodshot eyes
- Dilated pupils
- Hyper-alertness
- Panic
- Seizures from high doses
- The presence of any unexplained white powder
- Small spoons, mirrors, razor blades and rolled paper money used for snorting
- Small bottles with screw-top lids and small plastic packets for storing
- Increase in body temperature, respiration and pulse
- Grinding of teeth
- Obsessive touching or picking at various objects and parts of the body
- Repetitive dismantling of mechanical objects

There are many slang terms for cocaine. Here are just some: big C, blanco, blow, blast, Bolivian, Charlie, coke, Columbian, girl, heaven, happy powder, Mama Coca, mojo, nose candy, Peruvian, pimp, she, sniff, snort, snow, toot, trails, white lady, stardust. Cocaine was first used in the 19th century in surgery as an anesthetic and to reduce bleeding; it constricts blood vessels. Safer drugs came along to replace it. According to the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, about 33.7 million Americans over the age of 12 reported trying cocaine at least once. Among students surveyed, 3.7 percent of eighth graders, 5.2 percent of tenth graders, and 8 percent of twelfth graders reported using cocaine at least once. Law enforcement sources indicate that one gram of cocaine powder usually sells for \$100 in most cities. Crack cocaine tends to be sold in 0.1 and 0.2 gram rocks that generally sell for about \$10. In 1970, Congress classified cocaine as a Schedule II substance, which means it may lead to severe psychological or physical dependence.

Referred from: (<http://www.consumeraffairs.com/>)