

Hard Core

Cocaine, Heroin and Methamphetamine

No one, especially a young adult, likes to be lectured to about what he/she can or cannot do. It's up to every individual to make an informed decision to remain drug-free or to seek out the assistance they need. This may not always be possible, especially when dealing with addiction. The key to success is education, awareness and support. In this article, we review a few illicit drugs termed illegal opioids and list some of the dangers associated with the use and addiction to these substances.

Cocaine

STREET NAMES: Aunt Nora, Blow, Coke, Charlie, Nose Candy, Sneeze

ADDICTION: This is a highly addictive drug that increases levels of alertness, attention and energy. It is a narcotic stimulant and one of the deadliest street drugs. It is most often sniffed, ingested or rubbed into the gums. To more rapidly absorb the drug into the body, abusers inject it, but this substantially increases the risk of an overdose. Once a person begins taking the drug, it becomes difficult to resist.

EFFECTS: Cocaine use can lead to respiratory failure, stroke, cerebral hemorrhage or heart attack and even death. Children of cocaine-addicted mothers come into the world as addicts themselves. Many may suffer birth defects and a range of other problems. Despite its dangers, cocaine use continues to increase—likely because users find it so difficult to escape from the clutches of addiction.

PULL FACTORS: Some users believe that the stimulating quality of cocaine will boost their ability and performance at school or in athletic endeavors. Cocaine in all its forms, is known to produce a quick high that is appealing to many, especially in parties. Whilst it rapidly intensifies happiness, it may equally decrease appetite and create other complications.



Heroin

Street names: Beast, Black tar, Black pearl, Birdie powder, Brown sugar

ADDICTION: Heroin is a highly addictive drug typically sold as a white or brownish powder and used by millions of addicts around the world. Most heroin is injected, creating additional risks for the user such as HIV/AIDS and other related infections. Heroin is so addictive that once a person has heroin use disorder, seeking and using the drug becomes their primary purpose in life. This could ultimately lead to overdose and even death.

EFFECTS: Repeated heroin use creates long-term imbalances in neuronal and hormonal systems that are not easily reversed. This may affect decision-making abilities, the ability to regulate behavior and the responses to stressful situations. Heroin also produces profound degrees of tolerance and physical dependence where the body adapts to the presence of the drug, and withdrawal symptoms occur even within a few hours after the last time the drug is taken. Continued heroin use often results in heroin use disorder—a chronic relapsing disease that goes beyond physical dependence and is characterized by uncontrollable drug-seeking, no matter the consequences.

PULL FACTORS: Using heroin has been long called the “fix”- without heroin in their system, people who are addicted suffer from symptoms like diarrhea and vomiting, muscle twitches and pins and needles.



Methamphetamine

Street Name: Meth, Tik, Straws, Globes, Chalk, Cookies

ADDICTION: Crystal meth referred to as tik in South Africa is a highly addictive drug that can cause a set of mental health problems as well as serious health issues. Tik has become a buzzword in drug circles and has become increasingly popular among young people because it is a cheap drug that has taken South Africa by storm, causing much damage.

EFFECTS: The cravings involved with tik addiction and the strength of the desires for the drug lasts long after having stopped using it, even months after. Long term use creates symptoms like loss of appetite, weight loss, unnecessary aggressive attitudes and behaviors, rapid speech, high anxiety, insomnia, psychotic symptoms (hallucinations, delusions, aggressive itching of specific areas of the body) and constant headaches. In the first 24 hours following meth use, people may begin to experience initial withdrawal symptoms which can include fatigue and increased appetite. You may feel irritable, anxious and depressed.

PULL FACTORS: It is often used to help cope or forget problems (e.g. financial concerns, stress, lack of social support, etc), to help reduce inhibitions and increase confidence.



Some indicators of drugs use

- Needles or syringes not used for other medical purposes
- Burned silver spoons or Aluminum foil
- Missing shoe laces (used to as a tie off for injection sites)
- Decreased attention to hygiene and physical appearance
- Substantial increase in time spent sleeping
- Sudden worsening performance, e.g. decline in academic performance
- Wearing long pants or long sleeves to hide needle marks, even in very warm weather
- Lying or other deceptive behavior
- Increase in slurred, garbled or incoherent speech

GETTING OUT:

Whilst withdrawal can be difficult, addiction is treatable and recovery is possible. It is often best to go through a withdrawal process under the supervision of trained professionals. Taking care of yourself during this time is vital. Practice effective relapse prevention techniques and be kind to yourself. Most importantly, don't be afraid to reach out to friends, family, support groups, or treatment professionals if you need help. Below are some of the resource which could be helpful. Connect!



Recovery

- Stay busy – focus on short-term goals; occupy and motivate yourself
- Exercise to relieve stress – manage your stressors well
- End Toxic relationships – re-evaluate the people you associate with and if these push you further into an addiction; perhaps it's time to end some of these
- Practice Positive self- Talk – Believe in yourself and continue to affirm your self-worth
- If you're depressed or find yourself under psychological pressure – speak to a counsellor
- Support is essential through the recovery process. Find someone who knows what recovery is like and who can support and mentor you, or attend regular support meetings.



On reaching out

Acknowledge that you have a problem – it's the first step in seeking assistance

Believe in a friend whom you think can help – speak to them

Contact the CCDU office on info.ccd@wits.ac.za or alternatively call the

Wits Student Crisis Line **0800 111 331**

SOME USEFUL CONTACTS:



Alcoholics Anonymous South Africa
0861 HELPAA (435 722)



Al-Anon
0861 ALANON (25 26 66)



Narcotics Anonymous SA
083 900 MY NA (083 900 69 62)



SA National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA)
08611 REHAB (73422) or
(011) 673-0400



social development
Department:
Social Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Department of Social Development's Substance Abuse Line
0800 12 13 14 or
SMS 32312

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