

Cocaine and pregnancy

Cocaine (also called coke or blow) is a street drug that usually comes as a white powder.

It is snorted or mixed with water and then injected with a needle. When cocaine is made into small white rocks, called crack, it can be smoked.

No matter how cocaine is used, it's dangerous. If you use cocaine during pregnancy, it can cause serious harm to your baby.

Can using cocaine harm your health?

Yes. Cocaine affects your central nervous system and may change your sense of sight, sound and touch. It can cause stomach pain, nausea, body shakes (tremors) and headaches. It can make you feel restless, scared or angry.

Using cocaine can cause serious health problems, including:

- Heart attack
- Stroke. This is when a blood clot blocks a blood vessel that brings blood to the brain, or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts open.
- Respiratory failure. This is when too little oxygen passes from your lungs into your blood or when your lungs can't remove carbon dioxide from your blood.
- Loss of appetite
- Severe weight loss
- Loss of smell. This can happen when cocaine is snorted.
- Infections like HIV or hepatitis. Infections can happen when cocaine is injected through a dirty or shared needle.

Can using cocaine cause problems in pregnancy?

Yes. Using cocaine during pregnancy may cause serious problems for your baby, including:

- **Placental abruption.** This is a serious condition in which the placenta separates from the wall of the uterus before birth. The placenta supplies the baby with food and oxygen through the umbilical cord. Placental abruption can cause very heavy bleeding and can be deadly for both mother and baby.
- **Premature birth.** This is birth that happens too early, before 37 weeks of pregnancy.
- **Low birthweight.** This is when a baby is born weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces.
- **Miscarriage.** This is when a baby dies in the womb before 20 weeks of pregnancy.
- **Neonatal abstinence syndrome (also called NAS).** This is a group of conditions a newborn can have if his mother is addicted to drugs during pregnancy. NAS happens when a baby gets addicted to a drug before birth and then goes through drug withdrawal after birth.

How can you get help to quit using cocaine?

Talk to your health care provider. He can help you get treatment to quit. Or contact:

- National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence
(800) 622-2255
- Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator
(800) 662-4357

For more information

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
Mother to Baby

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