

# Crack Cocaine Examined

By Jim Rachels



Cocaine had been around for a long time before the introduction of crack cocaine and had always been a way to turn a quick profit but when crack cocaine came along the profits tripled. The crack epidemic swept through the country in the 80s. With this came greed. Money was the only thing that meant something to these dealers. They were never concerned about what it was doing to their customers. I heard once that someone sold their own mother crack. Their reasoning was that she was going to get it somewhere anyway so might as well be from them.

So what is the difference between cocaine and crack cocaine? Crack cocaine is commonly made by mixing the cocaine with baking soda or ammonia and water and then heating it. There are other ways to make it but this is one of the most common ways of doing it.

Crack cocaine is a refined version of cocaine. Cooking it brings it back to its original base state. With crack when you cook it those extra chemicals will burn off. This makes the crack purer and more potent. Crack gets its name from people smoking it and it makes a crackling sound. When people buy cocaine it is usually cut with a number of other things. It ranges in color from off-white, white or a pale rose. It looks like and is hard as a rock. You can snort it, smoke it or inject it.

Here are two reasons for the popularity of crack cocaine. One is that it is able to be broken down into little rocks and sold cheaply and the other reason is by smoking it gives you an immediate and sometimes overwhelming response to the drug causing extreme euphoria. But its effects have been known to be unpredictable. It affects different people in different ways. Some people will be paranoid and some might get quiet. Everyone is different. The way someone responds mostly depends on the quality of the drug.

Crack cocaine had become prevalent in the inner cities. This is because back in the 70s and 80s cocaine was very expensive and mostly available to people with higher incomes. Crack cocaine was an inexpensive alternative drug that people in the inner cities were able to afford. The crack cocaine epidemic then spread throughout the country like a virus.

It was also extremely cheap to make and once the cocaine was cut and cooked it could end up doubling the product the dealer had for sale, sometimes more than double. Some dealers went from making hundreds of dollars to thousands of dollars daily.

One of the effects of this was that dealers were now looking to protect their territories and now they had the money to arm themselves with high-power weaponry. With this came a wave of violence that mainly affected the lower-income neighborhoods. Dealers were killing each other

at an alarming rate. There were multiple homicides every day for quite a long time.

Even though drug abuse does not discriminate crack cocaine hit the black community the worst. Most of the crack-related arrests were of black people even though white people used crack just as much. Because of this crack came through and destroyed so many communities in cities across the United States.

So what are the effects of this drug that makes it so popular amongst addicts? The main effect that users describe is extreme euphoria.

There are also some negative effects. Effects such as hyperactivity, weight loss, sore throat, slowed digestion and increased heart rate. There are many other side effects that go along with using crack cocaine these are just a few.

So what's the difference between cocaine and crack cocaine?

Here are some of the differences.

From [www.drugabuse.com](http://www.drugabuse.com):

- **The duration of the drug's effects.** Smoking crack cocaine causes an immediate high that is very short, often diminishing within 5-10 minutes.
- **The intensity of the drug.** Crack cocaine results in a near immediate high that is much more intense compared to pure cocaine in powder form.
- **Addiction potential.** The fast, intense high and quick diminishing effects of crack cocaine can make a person more likely to use it repeatedly, increasing the risk of developing an addiction.
- **Cost.** Crack cocaine is mixed with impurities and can be made anywhere, making it a much cheaper alternative to cocaine. The low cost associated with crack cocaine is what initially made it so popular.

Now let's talk about what are signs to look out for if people feel a relative or friend is currently using. Here is a list of some things to look out for. Also if you or a loved one experienced 2 or more of the things below than they most likely have a substance use problem. More from [www.drugabuse.com](http://www.drugabuse.com):

- Using more and more crack to get the same high
- Experiencing strong urges to use crack cocaine.
- Going through symptoms of withdrawal when crack use is stopped or dramatically reduced.
- Having arguments or strained relationships with friends or loved ones that are caused or worsened by crack use.
- Having trouble handling obligations at work, school, or home because of your use of crack.
- Cutting back or quitting enjoyable activities as a result of crack use.
- Inability to cut back or stop using crack even if you want to.
- Inability to stop using crack even after you are aware that it has caused or worsened a physical or mental health issue.
- Spending a lot of time obtaining, using, or withdrawing from crack.
- Taking crack in larger amounts or for longer lengths of time than planned.
- Using crack when it is physically dangerous to do so, such as while driving.

When abusing crack for extended periods of time some of the things that happen to people are extreme weight loss, mental health issues and even their teeth start to rot and fall out because people tend to not take care of their hygiene while going through heavy abuse.

Here are some of the effects crack cocaine has on the user:

- Paranoia
- Dilated pupils
- Psychosis
- Twitches
- Loss of appetite
- Insomnia
- Impaired judgment

Another byproduct of crack abuse is women giving birth to crack-addicted babies. This puts the child in extreme distress. The babies then need to be weaned off of the drug. I've even heard stories of women that were so high

during the delivery the next day they didn't even remember that they gave birth. Because of this children all over the world are constantly being born into this situation. Again I think the most important thing to do here is to educate these expecting mothers on the dangers of substance abuse while pregnant no matter what substance they are using.

So what type of treatment should one seek out should they find themselves addicted to crack cocaine?

I think the first thing that needs to be done is to tell your family and your support system about your addiction. If your family and friends know you have an issue it makes it that much easier for them to help you in your time of need.

The second thing that should be done is to reach out to a professional. Someone like a therapist or psychologist can help immensely. The help of professionals is something that can't be emphasized enough.

One thing that is commonly used by mental health professionals is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). CBT is a tool used by many mental health professionals to help deal with addiction issues. CBT is also used for many other things such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, ADHD and PTSD. It has been shown to be quite effective at helping people with these problems. CBT helps narrow down some of the reasons you are reaching for your substance of choice when a feeling of pain or discomfort arises. The only way to help yourself is to understand why you are doing the things your doing. You need to really look inside to discover the answer to the question of why you are doing what you are doing.

So what do we do once we identify the things that are causing our substance abuse? I think the first thing that should be done is to tell all of your friends and family about the issues you are facing because of substance abuse. Make sure you tell everyone you interact with on a consistent basis. Especially those you feel care for you. Having the support of the people around you can be priceless and in order to get help from them, you need to ask them. This will also help keep you accountable to someone and this helps immensely in getting and staying sober. This will give the ones who care about you a chance to help you get better and back on your feet.

In the end your recovery depends on your will to change what is going on in your life. You need to do as much research as you can to figure out why you are doing the things you are doing. You need to familiarize yourself with the inner workings of your mind and only then will you be able to change yourself for the better. I truly believe this. I believe that once you are able to grab hold of and understand the way your brain is functioning you will be able to change your life for the better.

