What Happens To Your Brain When You Use Cocaine?

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You may already know that cocaine is an incredibly addictive illegal stimulant drug, made from the leaves of the coca plant. But what happens to your brain when you use cocaine?

Although many people first experience cocaine in a social setting and consider it a party drug, taking it soon leads to serious addictions and potentially life-threatening health problems.

Cocaine comes in two forms; a white powder or a crystallized rock (known as crack). Crack is a more potent form of cocaine that is smoked, and many people start taking this after becoming addicted to cocaine.

Your Brain When You Use Cocaine

Understanding exactly what is happening to your brain when using cocaine will help you recognize the serious dangers of addiction. Any drug changes the way that your brain functions and causes a shift in the way that nerve cells communicate with one another. These nerve cells, known as neurons, send messages to one another by releasing various chemicals in the brain. These chemicals (neurotransmitters) then attach to receptors in the brain and create a response. For example, chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin cause feelings of happiness and positivity. If there are not enough of these neurotransmitters in the brain, it causes low feelings and can lead to issues like depression.

Your brain is constantly sending messages back and forth using neurotransmitters and this system governs how you think and feel. When you use drugs like cocaine, this messaging system is disrupted.

When you use cocaine, it tells your brain to stop recycling dopamine. This means that the neurotransmitter does not get used up, it continues to build up in your brain. These drastically increased levels of dopamine in the brain are what cause the 'high' feeling. You are likely to experience a feeling of intense happiness and increased energy. However, disrupting neurotransmitters in this way has some serious long-term effects.

Cocaine Dependency Is Built

The reason that people start using cocaine more regularly is that they are beginning to rewire their brain. It learns to crave the experience of a dopamine build-up and the user is likely to continue taking cocaine. Eventually, this becomes a fully-fledged addiction and the user finds it incredibly difficult to stop.

Repeated cocaine use also has a long-term impact on the dopamine systems, completely changing the way that they work, even when not using the drug. Their brain becomes reliant on the drug to produce dopamine, so they find that normal activities they used to enjoy do not satisfy them anymore. People also develop a higher tolerance to the drug with repeated use, meaning that they need more to feel any effect. Long-term cocaine users will take the drug just to feel normal because their dopamine systems are damaged and they experience very low feelings when not taking it. It's common for people to feel a 'crash' for days after taking cocaine and have a strong craving to take it again.

Once you understand what happens to your brain when you use cocaine, it is clear how it can quickly develop into an addiction. Many people that only intend to try the drug once or twice or take it on rare occasions soon find themselves with a serious addiction that they are struggling to manage.

The Bad Withdrawls From Cocaine

When people are addicted to cocaine, they experience serious withdrawal symptoms when not taking the drug. These include:

- Depression
- Serious fatigue
- Sleep problems and intense nightmares
- Lack of cognitive function and concentration
- Restlessness and irritability
- Increased appetite

The dopamine systems in the brain have been rewired to be reliant on cocaine use, so when the user attempts to stop, it causes a lot of physical and mental problems. In order to beat cocaine addiction, users need the right support so they are able to beat the withdrawal symptoms and rewire the messaging systems in the brain again.

If you think that you may have a problem with cocaine use or you have a friend or loved one with an addiction, it is important to contact a treatment center right away. Findlay Recovery Center is an affordable facility offering tailored drug treatment programs. We have a lot of experience working with cocaine users and we can provide the right support to help people beat their addiction.

If you are concerned about yourself or a loved one, reaching out to somebody for support is the first step on your journey to recovery. You can find all of the relevant details on our contact page.

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About Our Company

Findlay Recovery Center is a drug & alcohol treatment center in Findlay, Ohio that offers evidence-based, detoxification and residential inpatient treatment at an affordable rate.

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