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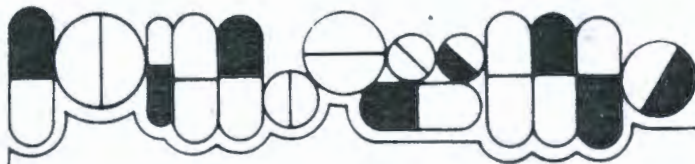
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NIDA Capsules

Issued by the Press Office of the National Institute on Drug Abuse
5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20857
301/443-6245

COCAINE. THE BIG LIE.

To counter increasing cocaine use among older teenagers and young adults, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) launched a multi-media Cocaine Abuse Prevention Campaign, COCAINE. THE BIG LIE., in March, 1986. This public service campaign, developed by Needham Harper Worldwide, under the auspices of The Advertising Council, Inc., focuses on the addictive qualities of cocaine, its potential for producing severe health consequences and the need to seek treatment. As part of this campaign, an 800-toll-free telephone number, 1-800-662-HELP, operational after April 5, 1986, will direct users to treatment facilities in their local community.

From 1982 reports, NIDA estimates that between 20 and 24 million Americans have tried cocaine at least once in their lives; between 11 and 13 million used cocaine during the last year; and between 3 and 5 million used cocaine during the last month. Young adults, age 18 to 25, showed the highest percent of lifetime cocaine use: 28 percent have tried the drug at least once in their lifetime. NIDA has targeted its campaign to young adults, age 18 to 35, the age group showing greatest use of cocaine.

NIDA's latest study of drug use among high school seniors has found that seniors in the Class of 1985 are using cocaine at an unprecedented level. Seventeen percent have tried cocaine, 13% have used the drug in the last year, and 7% in the past month. Cocaine use is up in 1985 among virtually all of the subgroups of seniors examined: among males and females, college bound and non-college bound, those in rural and urban areas, and all regions of the country except the South.

Cocaine is one of the most powerfully addictive of the drugs of abuse. In laboratory studies, animals given free access to cocaine will inject it to the point of death, selecting cocaine in preference to food and water. Clinicians estimate that approximately 10% of the people who use the drug "recreationally" will go on to serious, heavy use and an individual cannot predict or control the extent to which he or she will use the drug.

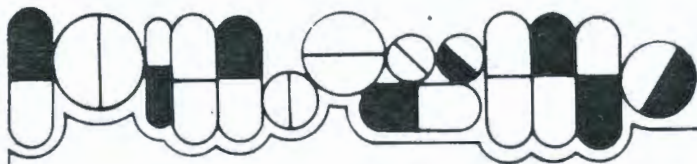
Cocaine exerts its effect by acting directly on the reward or pleasure centers of the brain. This brain action produces an intense desire to experience the effects of cocaine again and accounts for the development of compulsive use beyond the control of the user.

NIDA's multimedia prevention campaign includes radio and television public service announcements (PSA's) and print ads. It features real people from all walks of life who have been addicted to cocaine. They describe the seductive and addictive qualities of the drug and the devastating effect it has had on their own health, career and relationships.

Also included in the campaign, and currently available from NIDA, is a new publication, COCAINE ADDICTION: IT COSTS TOO MUCH. It has already been distributed to numerous organizations across the country. A Spanish translation of the publication will be available soon. For copies of this publication write to: COCAINE, P.O. Box 2305, Rockville, MD 20850.

For further information on NIDA's cocaine prevention campaign, please call the Communications Services Branch, NIDA on (301) 443-1124.

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COCAINE FREEBASE

Freebase is a form of cocaine that is smoked. It is extremely dangerous, yet increasing in popularity. In 1982, almost 7 percent of clients admitted to treatment facilities were freebasing cocaine, up from 1 percent in 1979. Of the almost 11,000 hospital emergency room visits reported to NIDA's Drug Abuse Warning Network in 1984, 6.1 percent involved cocaine smoking, up from 2.2 percent in 1983.

Freebase is the result of a chemical process whereby "street cocaine" (cocaine hydrochloride) is converted to a pure base by removing the hydrochloride salt and many of the "cutting" agents. The end product, freebase, is not water soluble. Therefore, the only way to get it into the system is to smoke it.

Freebase is smoked in a water pipe. It's more dangerous than "snorting" cocaine because it reaches the brain within seconds, resulting in a sudden and intense high. The euphoria a user experiences, however, quickly disappears and the user faces an enormous craving to freebase again and again. Consequently, freebasers often increase the dose and the frequency of the dose, resulting in a severe addiction which includes physical debilitation and financial ruin.

The reported symptoms of freebasing cocaine include weight loss, increased heart rate and blood pressure, depression, paranoia, and hallucinations. Manic paranoia or depressive psychoses have been seen in some heavy users. There is also some concern that smoking freebase may have a specific effect on the lungs.

CRACK

Of growing concern is the apparent increase in the use of "crack". While there is no way of estimating the extent of "crack" in the U.S., it appears to be increasing in popularity. "Crack" is the street name given to freebase cocaine that has been processed from cocaine hydrochloride to a base, using ammonia or baking soda and water and heating it to remove the hydrochloride, rather than the more volatile method of processing which uses ether. The process to convert cocaine hydrochloride to "crack" does not necessarily result in the elimination of hydrochloride, fillers and impurities in the cocaine, and sodium bicarbonate. The term "crack" refers to the crackling sound that is heard when the mixture is smoked (heated), presumably due to the sodium bicarbonate.

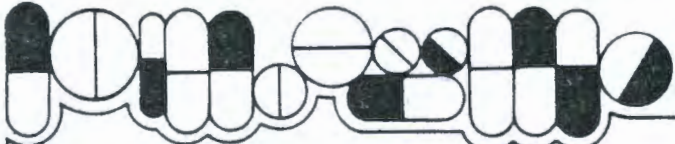
What is particularly alarming about "crack" is that, for the first time, it is being mass marketed on the streets in its freebase form, eliminating the need for the user to process "street cocaine" into freebase.

(more)

"Crack" resembles hard shavings similar to slivers of soap. It is sold in small vials, in folding papers, or in heavy tinfoil. It is smoked in a pipe. The cost of one or two doses (300 milligrams) reportedly range from \$5.00 to \$10.00.

"Crack" is sometimes called "rock" which should not be confused with "rock cocaine". "Rock cocaine", sold in California, is a cocaine hydrochloride product for intranasal snorting. It is white in color, about the size of a pencil eraser, and sells for about \$20.

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