



ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE IN AVIATION

COCAINE

What is cocaine? Cocaine is a stimulant drug extracted from the leaves of the coca bush (*Erythroxylum coca*), which is native to South America. The coca leaf extract is processed to create cocaine hydrochloride, freebase and crack cocaine.

Cocaine and safety

It may be dangerous to undertake complex tasks after using cocaine due to:

- over-confidence in skill that is not supported by an actual improvement in ability
- taking unnecessary risks
- aggressive and dangerous behaviour
- impaired ability to react appropriately
- the user can suddenly fall asleep as the stimulant effects wear off.

A person using cocaine may think they can alter their behaviour to counteract any impairment in their ability. However, this is dangerous as the effects of the drug may mean that the user:

- fails to notice something they would normally have observed
- may have an altered view and experience of reality — their actions and responses may be quite different to what is actually needed
- may be unaware of how much their skills are impaired after using cocaine.

Long-term and short-term effects of cocaine

The short-term effects can last anywhere from a few minutes to a couple of hours, depending on how the cocaine is taken and the person taking it. When the immediate 'rush' of the cocaine has worn off, the person may experience a 'crash'. Other immediate effects may include:

- physiological arousal, including increased body temperature and heart rate
- enlarged pupils

- exhilaration
- anxiety
- dry mouth
- increased breathing rate
- increased talkativeness or quiet contemplation and rapture
- feelings of great physical strength and mental capacity
- increased libido and elevated sexual arousal
- feeling of wellbeing
- anxiety, agitation and panic
- paranoia
- unpredictable violent/aggressive behaviour
- feeling more awake and alert, reduced need for sleep
- increased performance of simple tasks
- headache
- increased blood pressure and heart rate (after initial slowing)
- reduced appetite
- increased body temperature
- indifference to pain and localised pain relief.

The immediate effects of cocaine intensify when the drug is taken in greater quantities. People may also experience tremors, muscle twitches, nausea and vomiting, rapid and weak pulse, arrhythmia, chest pain, heart attack, hyperthermia, seizures and stroke.

High quantities and frequent, heavy and long-term use of cocaine can lead to 'cocaine psychosis', which is characterised by paranoid delusions, hallucinations, and bizarre, aggressive or violent behaviour. These symptoms usually stop a few days after the person stops taking cocaine, although some people may need treatment.

The risk of overdose is high, since the strength and mix of street cocaine is usually unknown. An overdose of cocaine can result in increased heart rate and body temperature, seizures, heart attack, brain haemorrhage, kidney failure, stroke and repeated convulsions. All of these can lead to coma and death.

COCAINE

Long-term effects of cocaine use may include:

- insomnia
- depression
- anxiety, paranoia and psychosis
- eating disorders and weight loss
- sexual dysfunction
- hypertension and irregular heart beat
- sensitivity to light and sound
- hallucinations — some people may even experience sensations of insects crawling under the skin
- cerebral atrophy (wasting of the brain) and impaired thinking.

Some of the other long-term effects of cocaine are related to the method of ingesting the drug:

- Repeated snorting damages the lining of the nose and nasal passages, and can also damage the structure separating the nostrils.
- Smoking crack cocaine can cause breathing difficulties, chronic cough, bronchitis and other respiratory problems.
- Cocaine is 'cut' with substances that are poisonous when injected. They can cause collapsed veins, abscesses and damage to the heart, liver and brain.
- If injected into the skin cocaine can cause severe vasoconstriction, which may prevent blood flowing to the tissue, potentially resulting in severe tissue damage.

Aviation workplace requirements

In accordance with Civil Aviation Safety Regulation Part 99, personnel who perform, or are available to perform, safety-sensitive aviation activities are subject to random alcohol and other drug (AOD) testing. Testing may be conducted to detect the presence of cocaine above the permitted level.

For testable drugs, the permitted level is a concentration of the testable drug in 100 mls of blood that is less than the confirmatory target concentration for that drug specified in Table 5.1 of the Australian Standard 4760-2006.

The aim of the testing program is preventative, not punitive. However, the regulations provide for a suitable enforcement regime to deal with personnel whose tests return confirmed readings over the permitted levels for drugs or alcohol.

Community support services

Alcohol and Drug Information Service

Each state and territory has an AOD information telephone service. Many operate 24 hours, and offer a free-call number for people living in regional areas.

Australian Capital Territory
24 Hour Alcohol and Drug Telephone Line
02 6207 9977

New South Wales
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
02 9361 8000 or 1800 422 599 (rural)

Northern Territory
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
1800 131 350

Queensland

Alcohol and Drug Information Service
07 3236 2414 or 1800 177 833 (rural)

South Australia

Alcohol and Drug Information Service
1300 13 13 40

Tasmania

Alcohol and Drug Information Service
1800 811 994 (24 hour)

Victoria

DirectLine
1800 888 236

DrugInfo

1300 85 85 84

Family Drug Helpline

1300 660 068

Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS Line)

03 9418 1020 or 1800 014 446 (rural)

Western Australia

Alcohol and Drug Information Service
08 9442 5000 or 1800 198 024 (rural)

Parent Drug Information Service

08 9442 5050 or 1800 653 203 (rural)

CASA contacts

CASA has established a virtual resource centre on AOD in the Australian aviation sector, providing comprehensive policy and program advice, resources for education and training purposes, self-assessment tools, links to useful documents and services, and a range of other materials. The website can be found at www.casa.gov.au/aod.

CASA AOD Program Manager

The Program Manager for the CASA AOD initiative can be contacted at aod@casa.gov.au.