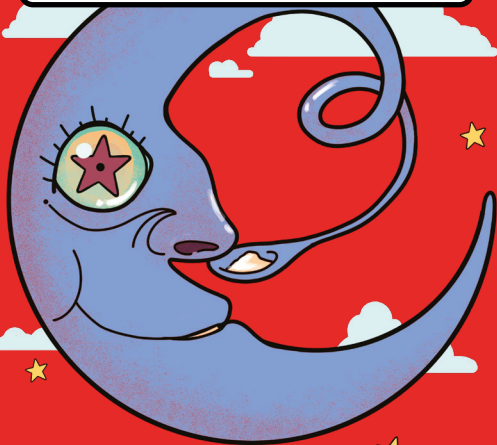


cocaine

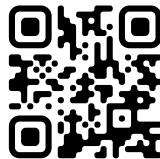
A HARM REDUCTION GUIDE



**QUEERS & PEERS
TOGETHER FOR SAFER USE**

cocaine

A HARM REDUCTION GUIDE



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SEX, DRUGS, & CARE FOR ALL
queerhealth.info/sdc4all



ANTIDOTE
LONDON FRIEND



THIS BOOKLET IS CO-PRODUCED BY
The Love Tank & Antidote

WORDS

Dr Benjamin Weil

CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr Will Nutland
Dr Leo Pavam
Monty Moncrieff
Julian Dineen

ILLUSTRATIONS

Colin Abbott

DESIGN

Richard Kahwagi

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WHAT IS HARM REDUCTION?

Harm reduction is a practice that aims to minimise the negative impacts of using drugs. It means providing care, instead of judgement, to people who are using them.

This includes giving information about how to use drugs more safely, how to recognise signs of overdose or withdrawal, and when and where to seek help.

This booklet contains some essential tips about how to use cocaine as safely as possible.

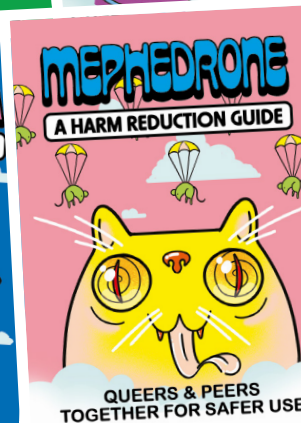
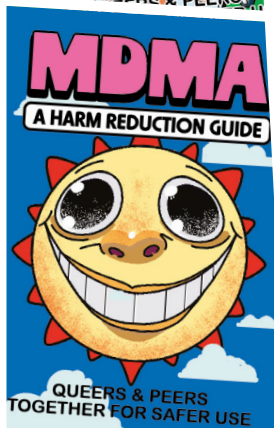
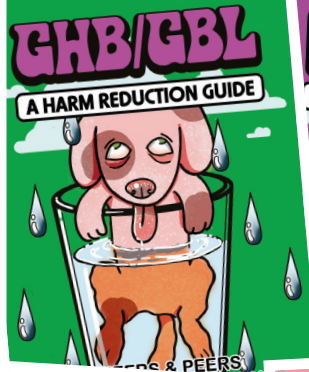
There's more harm reduction advice about cocaine and other drugs at:

queerhealth.info/sdc4all

OTHER GUIDES IN THIS SERIES INCLUDE:



- GHB/GBL
- Ketamine
- MDMA
- Mephedrone





WHAT IS COCAINE?

Cocaine - also known as coke or Charlie - is a stimulant derived from the leaves of the coca plant. It's typically found in the form of a white powder that people snort.

Cocaine makes us feel energised, chatty, and alert. It's fast acting with short-lived effects.

RISKS

Taking too much cocaine - or using it when very tired or fatigued - can cause 'overamping' (a stimulant overdose).

It can make someone feel panicked, aggressive, or extremely agitated.

Physically, it can also cause a racing heart, chest pain, and, in some cases, a heart attack.

If you are pre-disposed to or have a heart condition, be cautious about using cocaine and keep your doses light - especially if already feeling tired or run down.

Because of the pressure it puts on the heart, cocaine does not mix well with other drugs.

Avoid using cocaine with psychedelics - like LSD, 2CB or mushrooms - as this can cause severe anxiety.

Also try to avoid drinking alcohol when using cocaine.

The combined effects in the body can place enormous

pressure on the heart and, because it masks the effects of alcohol, using cocaine can encourage excess drinking.

DOSING

Cocaine is usually taken by snorting. It can be swallowed or 'gummed' too.

Gumming cocaine means rubbing a small amount over the gums, which can leave them feeling a little numb.

A light dose of cocaine is 10-30mg, while **a more common dose** is 30-60mg.

It's usually not possible to measure doses of a powder when out and about.

It's a good idea to **invest in some milligram scales** to visualise how different doses look (for when it's snorted later or cut into lines).



SAFER SNORTING

Snorting powders like cocaine carries some risks.

It can lead to infections and frequent snorting can damage the nostrils (which can make someone more prone to infections or cause long-term scarring).

Hepatitis C is especially easily transmitted by snorting - it can survive on surfaces for up to six weeks!

Someone can reduce long-term damage caused to their nose from snorting by:

- **alternating nostrils** every time they snort
- using a straw to **snort higher up the nose** to avoid damaging the septum
- taking a **break if the nose is bleeding**
- **using a saline rinse** to gently clean the nose at the end of the night or session

Someone can reduce their risks of getting an infection from snorting by:

- **avoiding sharing** snorting equipment
- **using a clean straw** or clean rolled up piece of paper - rather than used bank notes - to snort lines (Remember: venues usually have clean straws behind the bar!)
- carrying **hand sanitiser to disinfect any equipment** (especially keys, cards and surfaces)
- consider keeping a **specific, clean card for crushing or cutting drugs** (to avoid using a bank card that comes into contact with ATMs or payment devices)



AVOIDING DEPENDENCE

Cocaine can be highly addictive and it's easy to develop a tolerance to it, meaning needing to use more and more in a single session to feel its effects.

It's a good idea to **take breaks of at least a few weeks** between sessions to avoid developing a tolerance or becoming dependent on cocaine.

The desire to do cocaine is often triggered by our surroundings: sights and sounds that bring cocaine to mind.

To **avoid temptation after a session**, change locations, try to keep busy with something else, or hang out with friends that don't use.

DRUG TESTING

Sometimes, people are sold drugs that are over-dosed, or contain substances other than the drug they think they are buying, which have much stronger effects. This can cause fatal overdoses, even in experienced drug users.

It's always a good idea to test drugs before using them. Links to drug testing services - including options for testing drugs at home - can be found at **queerhealth.info/sdc4all**

FURTHER SUPPORT

If you or someone you know needs support with their drug use (including addiction and dependence), you can find free LGBTQ+ inclusive support at: londonfriend.org.uk/antidote/ and more general support at: talktofrank.com

For more harm reduction advice, and advice on what to do in an emergency or if someone is overdosing visit: queerhealth.info/sdc4all

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