



Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

What is Cocaine?

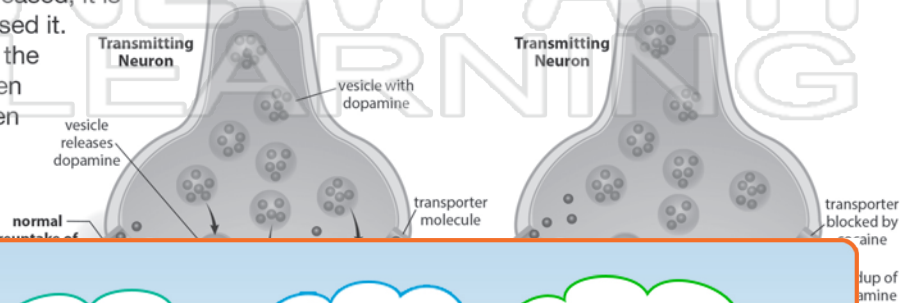
Cocaine is a stimulant made from the leaf of the coca plant. It often comes in the form of a white powder that some people inhale through their nose (**snorting**). Another form of cocaine, known as **crack**, can be smoked.



Cocaine Changes the Way the Brain Works

Neurons in the brain send messages to each other by releasing special chemicals, called **neurotransmitters**, which attach to key sites on neurons, called **receptors**. **Dopamine** is a neurotransmitter released by neurons in the **limbic system**—the part of the brain that controls feelings of pleasure.

Normally, after dopamine has been released, it is pumped back to the neuron that released it. But cocaine **blocks the pump**, called the **dopamine transporter**. Dopamine then builds up in the gap (**synapse**) between neurons. The result is that dopamine keeps affecting a nerve cell after it should have stopped. That's why someone who uses cocaine feels



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flow of blood through the body.

Short-Term Health Effects

- enlarged pupils
- constricted blood vessels
- increased heart rate & blood pressure
- increased energy & alertness, insomnia
- anxiety, panic attacks
- paranoia, psychosis, erratic behavior
- heart rhythm problems, heart attack
- stroke, seizure, coma

Long-Term Health Effects

- loss of sense of smell, nosebleeds & nasal damage from snorting
- trouble swallowing from snorting
- infection & death of bowel tissue (from decreased blood flow)
- poor nutrient absorption and weight loss
- lung damage from smoking



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How does Cocaine change the way the Brain works?

PREVIEW

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