



Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

Gotham Center
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Dear Health Care Professional:

In 2018, more New Yorkers died from drug overdose than homicides, suicides and motor vehicle crashes combined. Cocaine (including crack and powder forms) plays an increasingly prominent role in this crisis. From 2014 to 2018, the rate of overdose deaths involving cocaine more than doubled, from 4.7 to 10.7 per 100,000 New Yorkers. In 2018, 52% of overdose deaths involved cocaine. As part of HealingNYC, the City's response to the overdose crisis, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is working with health care providers and communities to expand awareness about risks associated with cocaine use.

Serious risks associated with cocaine use include: cardiovascular disease events and mortality, particularly among older individuals, and exposure to fentanyl — a powerful opioid, which is 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine and may be mixed into cocaine, leading to inadvertent, and potentially fatal, opioid ingestion. Many New Yorkers could benefit from knowing about both of these risks and related harm reduction strategies. As a New York City health care provider, you can help improve the health of your patients and the City by making these small changes:

- When asking patients about drug use, use neutral, person-centered language.
- Talk with patients about cardiovascular risks associated with crack and powder cocaine use.
- Inform patients about the potential risk of fentanyl exposure and fatal overdose when using crack and powder cocaine.
- Offer patients harm reduction strategies, including naloxone for prevention of fatal opioid overdose.

This **Cocaine Action Kit** includes clinical tools and resources for you and educational materials for your patients. To access the materials online, visit nyc.gov/health and search for **cocaine action kit**.

Thank you for your dedication to the health of New Yorkers and for your partnership in addressing this critical public health issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Oxiris Barbot MD". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner
New York City Department of
Health and Mental Hygiene