

# Tips for Safer Use of Cocaine and Crack



## Reducing Risk of Overdose

- Avoid mixing powder or crack cocaine with other drugs or alcohol. If you do mix, use less of each drug.
- Start with a small amount and go slowly.
- Avoid using when alone. Carry naloxone, a medication that can reverse an overdose if an opioid, such as fentanyl, is mixed in.
- Talk with your doctor or other health care professional about how to prevent serious health problems associated with overdose, such as heart attack, stroke, abnormal heart rhythm, very high blood pressure, and death.
- Be careful when it is hot out. Stimulant use increases the risk of heat-related illness such as heatstroke, which can be fatal.



## Reducing Risk When Smoking

- Use a pipe tip, or mouthpiece, to reduce the risk of burns to your lips, mouth, and throat.
- Use a wire screen or steel wool, such as a Chore Boy or Brillo, as a filter and let the pipe cool down between hits to prevent inhaling hot particles. See a doctor or other health care professional if you feel any pain when breathing after using.
- Keep lips hydrated with lip balm to reduce risk of cuts.
- Avoid using homemade pipes. Homemade pipes may get too hot, give off toxic fumes, or break while in use, which can lead to burns, cuts, or infections.
- To avoid the spread of infectious diseases, including HIV and hepatitis C, do not share your pipe.
- If smoking with foil (chasing), use real tinfoil and not foil from packaged foods like candy bars, which can be contaminated.



## Reducing Risk When Snorting

- Grind cocaine to remove clumps and hard pieces that can be painful while snorting and increase risk of injury to your nasal cavity.
- Use your own sterile straw and scooping spoon and avoid sharing to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, including HIV and hepatitis C.
- Alternate snorting sessions between both nostrils to allow one nostril time to heal in between sessions. This can help reduce risk of tissue damage in the nose.
- Use a water nasal spray or sniff up water immediately after snorting to dissolve the remaining coke. This will significantly reduce the potential damage to your nose.



## Reducing Risk When Injecting

- Use a sharp, sterile syringe each time you inject.
- Do not share equipment (including syringes and stems) to avoid the spread of infectious diseases, including HIV and hepatitis C.
- Rotate where you inject and make sure you are in a vein before you inject.

# Resources

For information about services available in NYC, visit **[nyc.gov/alcoholanddrugs](https://nyc.gov/alcoholanddrugs)**.

For free, confidential counseling and support 24/7, call or text 988 or chat at **[nyc.gov/988](https://nyc.gov/988)**.

