

What is levamisole?

Crack/cocaine can be cut with a **levamisole**, a substance used as a pig de-wormer. This can be toxic for humans and seriously affect the immune system, causing skin, lung, and other infections. Levamisole is the same colour as crack/cocaine, has no taste, and has a lower melting point ("cooks out") than crack/cocaine. This makes it hard to tell if it is in your drugs.

How often is
levamisole
detected in
cocaine?

BC's drug checking services found ~ 5% of cocaine/crack samples tested in 2019 contained levamisole. A BC harm reduction client survey found 24.4% of urine samples in 2018 and 10.7% in 2019 tested positive for cocaine and levamisole¹

Contaminated crack and cocaine can cause severe infections and skin colour changes in some people

How can I tell if I may have used crack/cocaine that has been cut with levamisole?

Most people who use crack/cocaine cut with levamisole **do not** experience symptoms or infections. It is unclear how much levamisole can cause symptoms, but is more likely after long-term use.

Symptoms are more commonly seen when people **smoke** crack/cocaine cut with levamisole, but there have also been reports of severe reactions after snorting or injecting.

1 You notice the skin on your ears, face, arms, legs or anywhere else, has purple or black patches, like a bad bruise.

2 It feels like you have an infection.

Some people may notice:

- A bad flu (e.g., chills, aches, feeling tired).
- A fever
- A cough that is getting worse.
- Difficulties breathing.



If you recently used crack/cocaine and notice any signs and symptoms, tell a trusted healthcare provider right away or go to an emergency department. These infections can get worse very quickly.

It is important to let healthcare providers know you have used crack/cocaine that may have been cut with levamisole, so that unnecessary, invasive testing can be avoided.

Will the infection(s) go away?

Yes, but some people will need to go to hospital to treat an infection. Once you stop using the crack/cocaine cut with levamisole, symptoms usually go away.

Can I still use crack/cocaine again or will I get another infection?

If people experience toxic reactions, it can happen again if cocaine/crack cut with levamisole is used again.

Test a different supply with drug checking services. Talk with your healthcare provider about longer-term follow-up care, such as prescription alternatives.

For drug checking services in BC:

- For current information and locations, see: towardtheheart.com/for-pwus
- For testing by mail or in person: Getyourdrugstested.com

1. Buxton J, Leclerc P, Papamihali K, Graham B, Hyshka E, Taylor M, et al., editors. Towards a cross-Canada surveillance of illicit drug content. Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addictions: Issues of Substance Conference; 2019; Canada.
2. Huy T, Tan D, Marnejo TP. Cutaneous Vasculopathy Associated with Levamisole-Adulterated Cocaine. *Clinical Medicine & Research*. 2013;11(1):26-30.
3. Jin Q, Kant S, Alhariri J, Geetha D. Levamisole adulterated cocaine associated ANCA vasculitis: review of literature and update on pathogenesis. *Journal of community hospital internal medicine perspectives*. 2018;8(6):339-44.