

Association says Crack harmful to lung health

Crack, a glamorized and inexpensive form of cocaine, is responsible for one of the fastest spreading drug epidemics in the United States.

The National Cocaine Hotline ("1-800-COCAINE") has estimated that as of June 1986, nearly 1 million Americans have tried crack.

A smoked substance, crack is the

most potent, addictive and dangerous drug found on the streets today. People using crack just once can become addicts, as its "hook" is a short-lived but soaring euphoric high that physiologically and psychologically needs to be repeated by the user. Crack also poses grave risks to the cardiopulmonary system, as one puff of the poisonous smoke can eas-

ily cause cardiac or respiratory arrest.

According to Michelle Wegienek, program assistant smoking and health, American Lung Association of Southeast Michigan, crack is a particular threat to lung health since it is a smoked substance.

"We're aware of crack's hazardous short-term effects on the user; however, the drug hasn't been around long enough to be able to draw conclusions about its long-term effects," said Wegienek. "We can conclude, though, that since crack is a toxic substance and is concentrated in the lungs it will cause severe lung damage."

CRACK'S IMMEDIATE effects on the lungs include:

- Chronic chest congestion.
- Wheezing and difficulty breathing.

- Black phlegm.
- Chronic coughing.
- Impairment of lung functions.

Crack, also known as rock (attributable to its appearance), is a 75-90 percent form of cocaine. When smoked, this toxic substance is absorbed into the bloodstream via the lungs. The drug's effects are instantly felt as the bloodstream carries the toxins to the brain within seconds, causing biochemical changes that result in an immediate "high."

Crack's effects on the body include:

- Rapid addiction.
- Immediate elevation of the heart rate and blood pressure.
- Irregular heartbeat.
- "Cocaine psychosis" including paranoia, visual and other sensory

hallucinations, violence, loss of sexual desire, extreme depression, social withdrawal and suicidal behavior.

• Serious toxic reactions including fatal brain seizures and cardiac arrest.

• Radical personality and behavior changes.

Crack use is cited as being a serious social problem, as it has cut across all racial, social and economic boundaries, according to studies done by the "1-800-COCAINE" Hotline. This has been attributed to the drug's availability, low cost and its immediate and intense "high."

CRACK is also perceived by its users as being safe, since it is a smoked substance rather than an injected drug. Similarly, the glamorous appeal of cocaine use is associated with crack use, which has added to the drug's popularity.

Concern is mounting in regard to adolescent crack use as indicators point to an increase of usage among teens.

"Adolescents can satisfy their curiosity about the drug's glamorized 'high' without spending a lot of money," said Wegienek. "However, what they don't know is that nearly all people who intend to 'try it just once' become addicted."

Misinformation about crack's deadly health effects, along with an alluring appeal of "euphoria" and the misconception that crack is a safe form of cocaine, need to be addressed in order to deter future use of the illegal drug.

The American Lung Association of Southeast Michigan (ALASEM) is especially alarmed and concerned

about crack use in the United States and supports the need for educational programs that address the myths and facts about this deadly drug.

ALASEM offers 35 free communi-

ty health services to the citizens of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. For more information about crack and its deadly effects, call ALASEM at 559-5100.

Youths recognized

Five Farmington-area high school students were honored April 29 at the Breakfast Optimist Club of Farmington/Farmington Hills as participants in Youth Appreciation Day.

The students were nominated by each school principal and were given plaques by the local club.

They include:

- Maria Feldman, a Farmington Hills resident attending North Farmington High School.

- Donna Walker, a Detroit resident attending Lutheran High School NW.

- Sharon McLaughlin, a Detroit resident attending Mercy High School.

- Karen Jenkins, a Farmington Hills resident attending Farmington High School.

- Luann Abdo, a Farmington Hills resident attending Harrison High School.

Neighborhood cleanups set

It may not be your most favorite chore, but spring clean-up can be fun, especially when it's a neighborhood project.

The folks in the Woodbrook subdivision will be pitching in and cleaning up their entrance Saturday, May 9.

And friends and neighbors in Colony Park will be sprucing up their subdivision Saturday, May 16, with

an incentive of refreshments for all and prize drawings for those who donate two hours of time.

The Farmington Hills Beautification Commission would like to know of any other neighborhood clean-up projects. Call the City Community Relations office at 473-8582 with information about groups keeping Farmington Hills beautiful.

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