

## 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 levamisole<sup>1</sup>

## 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](https://towardtheheart.com/for-pwus)
- For testing by mail or in person: [Getyourdrugstested.com](https://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, Marnejon 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.