



Before he developed his psychoanalytical theories, Sigmund Freud believed that cocaine could help his patients. In 1884, he published his ideas in *Über Coca*.

Among other things, he observed these presumed benefits:

...exhilaration and lasting euphoria, which in no way differs from the normal euphoria of the healthy person...You perceive an increase of self-control and possess more vitality and capacity for work....In other words, you are simply normal, and it is soon hard to believe you are under the influence of any drug....Long intensive physical work is performed without any fatigue...This result is enjoyed without any of the unpleasant after-effects that follow exhilaration brought about by alcohol....Absolutely no craving for the further use of cocaine appears after the first, or even after repeated taking of the drug...

Freud envisioned that people would use cocaine in oral solutions (not by needle-intake). He thought cocaine would be useful in these ways:

- as a mental stimulant
- as a possible treatment for digestive disorders
- as an appetite stimulant in case of wasting diseases
- as a treatment for morphine and alcohol addiction
- as a treatment for asthma
- as a local anaesthetic

When he realized he was wrong about his ideas - especially for using cocaine to treat morphine and alcohol addictions - Freud withdrew his paper. He was especially upset because he had recommended the use of cocaine as a treatment for his close friend, Ernst von Fleishl, who became a cocaine addict.

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Ernst von Fleishl - Early Cocaine Addict

Image of Ernst von Fleischl-Marxow, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Quoted passage from *Sigmund Freud: Pioneer of the Mind*, by Catherine Reef, pages 41-42. Online, courtesy Google Books.

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