

ADDICTIVE, DESTRUCTIVE AND DEADLY

The most recent statistics show that more than 13,000 people died from a heroin overdose in the past year. The number of heroin deaths is nearly seven times higher than it was 20 years ago.

This devastating drug comes with a long list of social and medical side effects, including HIV and hepatitis infections, increased crime and violence, and the destroyed lives of those who use heroin.

HEROIN'S DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES

Tooth Decay	Reduced sexual capacity and long term impotence in men
Inflammation of the gums	Menstrual disturbance in women
Constipation	Loss of memory and intellectual performance
Cold sweats	Depression
Itching	Pustules on the face
Weakening of the immune system	Loss of appetite
Coma	Insomnia
Respiratory Illness	
Muscular weaknesses	

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HEROIN

Heroin is a dangerous opioid drug that is synthesized from morphine, a substance extracted from the seeds of opium poppy plants. Heroin is usually sold as a white or brown powder, or as a black sticky substance, known as "black tar heroin." It can be injected, snorted, or smoked.

Heroin, also known as junk, smack, horse or chiva, was first created in 1874 by an English chemist. It was initially used as a medical painkiller, however, because of the highly addictive nature of heroin it was eventually classified as an illegal drug.

Today, heroin is widely available as a street drug. While it is sometimes found in pure form, most heroin sold on the street is usually mixed with other powders such as sugar, starch, talc, baking soda, etc. Some heroin is blended with Fentanyl, a synthetic opiate that may be up to 50 times more powerful, and is a major contributing factor to increasing overdose deaths.

The dramatic rise in the prescription of opioid pain medications such as Oxycontin® and Vicodin®, in the last decade has had a direct effect on heroin abuse. Almost 50% of young people who inject heroin admit to misusing prescription opioids first.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

If you or someone you know is struggling with a heroin addiction, there are resources available to help.

www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline

SAMHSA's National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

TTY: 1-800-487-4889

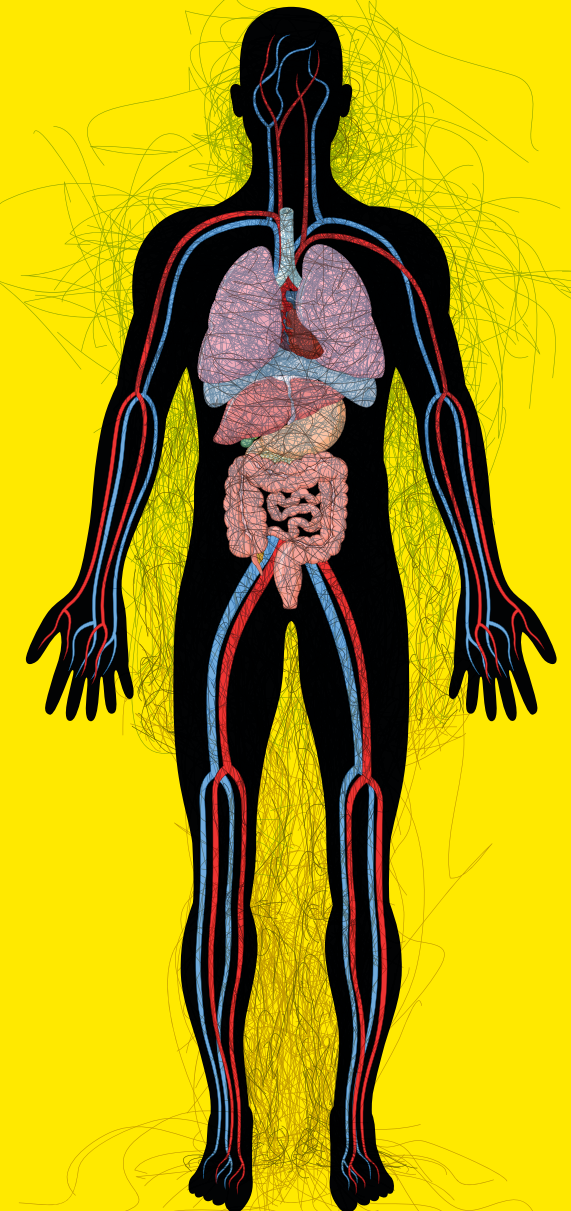
Text your zip code to **HELP4U (435748)** to find help near you.

in the know

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HEROIN

HOW IT AFFECTS THE BODY



A national survey indicated that almost 3.1 million Americans aged 12 and older have used heroin.





HEROIN'S REWIRING THE BRAIN: THE ROAD TO ADDICTION

Heroin rewires the brain, leading to an addiction that is difficult to break. Heroin affects opioid receptors in the brain, disrupting endorphin production. This causes an intense feeling of euphoria while acting as a painkiller. Over time, the body feels it needs heroin in order to function, and the mind feels as though it cannot live without it.

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

Heroin's effects can be felt within just a few seconds if injected, or in about 10 minutes if smoked or snorted. Effects usually wear off within 3 to 5 hours. Heroin warms the body as it rushes through the bloodstream. Heroin can cause dry mouth, nausea, and vomiting. It slows the body's physical and mental functions. Taking too much heroin can slow the body to the point where breathing stops. This is called a heroin overdose. Since people using heroin all react differently, how it will affect each individual is unknown, but one thing is certain: each dose of heroin can potentially lead to death.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Continued heroin use is devastating to the body. Frequent injections can lead to collapsed veins, infections of the blood vessels, and heart valves. As heroin slowly destroys the body, conditions like tuberculosis and arthritis can occur. Needle sharing can lead to HIV and other infections. Hepatitis C (liver disease) is most commonly associated with injection drug use.

HOW IT EFFECTS THE BRAIN

Chronic heroin abuse causes brain decay similar to the early stages of Alzheimer's. This decay is due to a lack of oxygen reaching the brain and can lead to difficulty thinking, suicidal thoughts, overall weakness, spastic attacks, and permanent hand tremors. Even doses of heroin that are too low to cause overdose can result in lowered blood oxygen levels, leading to sleep apnea, or irregular breathing while sleeping.

FEW SURVIVORS



HOW IT EFFECTS THE INTESTINES

Heroin reduces the action of muscles in the intestines, leading to constant constipation, hemorrhoids, or damage to the rectum that may require surgery. Long-term use can result in bowel movements that are 10 days to two weeks apart.

HOW IT EFFECTS THE KIDNEYS

Heroin use causes high levels of protein in urine that can lead to kidney failure. It can also lead to rhabdomyolysis, a condition in which the muscles rapidly break down, leading to kidney damage. Recovery from rhabdomyolysis usually requires dialysis and often a kidney transplant.

HEROIN WITHDRAWAL

When the effects of heroin fade, an individual starts to crave more. Without more heroin, withdrawal begins. Withdrawal from heroin causes restlessness, aches and pains in their bones, diarrhea and vomiting and severe discomfort.

HEROIN AND PREGNANCY

Women can pass a heroin addiction on to their unborn children. This condition is called neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS). Infants with NAS suffer withdrawal-like symptoms, including constant crying, fever, irritability,

SEVERE WITHDRAWAL



seizures, low weight gain, tremors, diarrhea, vomiting and sometimes death. Newborns with NAS are often hospitalized and require special treatment plans to help them overcome their addiction.

KICKING HEROIN

Heroin addiction is incredibly difficult to break, but it can be done. If you need help getting off of heroin, see a doctor as soon as possible. A physician will be able to offer you different treatment options, including prescription medications that may help to relieve the pain of withdrawal. Remember: heroin use has terrible effects on the body! If you've never used, the best thing to do is to never start. If you are currently using, take steps to save your health by quitting as soon as possible!

FATAL OVERDOSES

Heroin slows breathing and heart rate because it affects the brain stem. Take too much heroin and your body simply stops breathing. Just one dose can result in a fatal overdose.