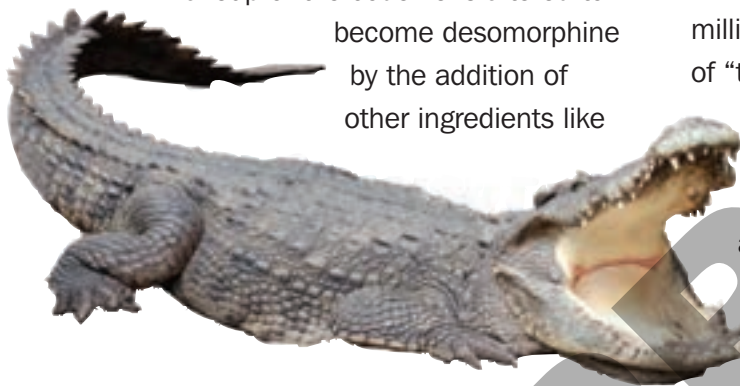


## KILLER CROC

You're probably familiar with the illegal drug heroin. It is highly addictive, inflicts violent withdrawal symptoms when a user tries to quit, and carries a wide range of connected dangers like HIV and hepatitis (which are easily contracted from injection needles). But would you believe that there is another drug out there that is even worse than heroin? Krokodil is a homemade drug that is far cheaper than heroin, but does far more damage to the body. In fact, once a person takes his first shot of Krokodil, he has given himself an average of one to two years left to live.

## COMPOSITION

Krokodil (the Russian version of "crocodile") is a homemade cocktail of poisonous chemicals; its technical name is desomorphine. The main ingredient is codeine in huge quantities. The molecular makeup of the codeine is altered to become desomorphine by the addition of other ingredients like



paint thinner, gasoline, and iodine. If these don't sound to you like the greatest substances to be injecting directly into your skin and bloodstream, you're correct. The resulting product is a light brown, thick sludge that is forced through a needle into the user's body. Officials estimate that each shot of Krokodil shortens the user's lifespan by an entire year. The high that desomorphine produces is far shorter than that of most other drugs, but is up to ten times stronger than standard morphine. The use of iodine produces such a strong odor that clothing, furniture, and even the structure of a building retain it permanently and must be destroyed.

## KROKODIL'S LIFE SO FAR

Russia has been the center of Krokodil addiction since it first appeared in 2002. Many heroin addicts, stuck without enough money to buy more heroin, make their own Krokodil in order to get high until they can afford heroin again. Russian drug enforcement officials are having a hard time dealing with Krokodil use, which has reached the level of an epidemic—about a million Russians are currently under the control of "the crocodile," which is practically a suicide drug. Whereas heroin used to account for most rehab facility admissions in Russia, Krokodil cases are now at least as common as heroin cases. The Russian government has suffered a lot of criticism for its failure to act in response to the Krokodil problem.

***In fact, once a person takes his first shot of Krokodil, he has given himself an average of one to two years left to live.***

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Go to [www.intheknowzone.com](http://www.intheknowzone.com) for more information on substance abuse. Increase your knowledge using the information, statistics, images, and links. Test your understanding with a quick quiz.

**Don't stay in the dark.  
Get In the Know!**

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# KROKODIL

*Synthetic heroin*





WHY IS IT CALLED “CROCODILE”?

Desomorphine’s street name, Krokodil, is a description of what the skin of users looks like after just a few shots. The corrosive chemicals literally eat the skin from the inside out, turning it gray, scaly, and rotten. This is the normal result of using it. If a user misses a vein while injecting the drug, he creates an immediate painful, permanent, infected sore that will quickly kill the surrounding skin and fall off. The internal damage to tissues like muscle is just as dramatic. In some sense, it is incorrect to talk about risks connected with Krokodil use—instead, it is guaranteed to tear the body apart and kill it within a year in most cases. Even heroin addicts know that a Krokodil high (less than two hours) is not worth this excruciating death, but they are so dependent that they don’t feel they have a choice.



STUCK IN THE CROCODILE’S TEETH

Just as a real crocodile refuses to let go of its prey once it captures it, Krokodil exerts an addictive hold more powerful than that of heroin. The withdrawal symptoms that an addict suffers are so severe that it takes powerful pain medication just to get through the detox process. Whereas an addict may have withdrawal symptoms for a little over a week after quitting heroin, Krokodil withdrawal symptoms last for a month. If the individual is fortunate enough to survive rehab, he will be left with permanent skin damage, ravaged body tissue, and tooth loss due to rotted gums. Amputation of extremities and limbs that have become hopelessly damaged is common. The sad truth is that recovering from using Krokodil hardly ever actually happens; almost all users lose their lives within two years of starting it. During that time, one former Krokodil addict remembers, it is the equivalent of a full-time job to make the drug, take it, sleep off the effects, and start the process over again.



violent withdrawal symptoms

excruciating death

COMING TO THE U.S.A.?

United States drug enforcement agencies are terrified at the thought of Krokodil becoming popular in our country. So far, its use has mostly been limited to Russia and some other European countries, but the proliferation of communication on the Internet threatens to spread the influence of this deadly homemade drug around the world. Despite its extreme destructive nature, Krokodil is attractive to users who are already addicted to more expensive, illegal drugs like heroin, but can’t afford to get them. If it begins to take hold in the United States, we could see situations that are now common in Russia: entire apartment buildings that can’t be lived in any more because of the toxic by-products of making Krokodil, and towns that have lost most of their inhabitants to the drug’s effects.



amputation



ONE OF THE WORST

If there is any drug that is worth staying away from at all costs, it is Krokodil. Shooting up your first dose is hardly any different than simply swallowing poison, except for the fact that death doesn’t come until your flesh has mostly rotted off your bones. Even those who are deeply immersed in the illegal drug trade are horrified at the effects this concoction has on its victims. When you combine its fast-working corrosion with a powerful addictive force, it is easy to see that Krokodil is a killer to be avoided, whatever it takes.

**The withdrawal symptoms that an addict suffers are so severe that it takes powerful pain medication just to get through the detox process.**