

# Heroin



## WHAT IS HEROIN?

Heroin is a highly addictive opioid drug that is synthesized from morphine.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT DOES HEROIN LOOK LIKE?

Heroin usually appears as a white or brown powdery or crumbly substance, or as a black sticky substance, known as “black tar heroin.”<sup>1,2</sup> (see images)<sup>3</sup>

## HOW IS HEROIN USED?

Heroin is a central nervous system depressant that is usually smoked, snorted or injected. All three ways deliver the drug to the brain rapidly.<sup>1,2</sup>

## WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF HEROIN ABUSE?

The user can get a dry mouth, feel heavy and dopy, may be awake and then suddenly fall asleep, have flushed skin, slowed breathing and constricted pupils. Heroin use may also cause itching, nausea, vomiting and constipation.<sup>2</sup>

## WHAT ITEMS OFTEN ACCOMPANY HEROIN ABUSE?

Depending on the method used, you may find syringes or needles, small glass or metal pipes, dirty spoons, tinfoil, cotton balls, bottle caps, lighters or other items used to heat the drug. Users may utilize belts, rubber tubing or other devices as a tourniquet to expand and expose their veins to inject heroin or other dangerous drugs.<sup>2</sup> (see images)<sup>3</sup>

## HOW LIKELY CAN SOMEONE GET ADDICTED TO HEROIN?

Approximately 23% of persons who use heroin will become dependent on it.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT IS A HEROIN OVERDOSE?

Heroin can depress heart rate and suppress breathing to such an extent that a user cannot survive without medical help.<sup>4</sup>

## ARE HEROIN-RELATED DEATHS INCREASING?

According to the CDC, the age-adjusted rate for drug-poisoning deaths in the United States involving heroin nearly quadrupled from 2000 to 2013; the most significant increase occurred after 2010.<sup>5</sup>

## WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

It is common for people with addictions to prescription opioid drugs to switch to heroin because it is cheaper and easier to obtain.<sup>6</sup>

## WHO CAN I CALL FOR HELP?

Substance abuse treatment services are available in your area and can help.<sup>7</sup>



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### Heroin

#### Educational Flyer by Clear Alliance

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