

# HEROIN & Opiates



## HEROIN STREET NAMES

Smack, Horse, Mud, Brown Sugar, Junk, Black Tar, Big H, Dope, Skag Skunk, Hell Dust, Thunder

Heroin is both the most abundant and the most rapidly acting of the opiates. It is processed from morphine, a natural occurring substance extracted from the Asian opium poppy plant. It is classified as a Schedule I drug—the group of the most highly addictive drugs—in the U.S. It is typically sold as a white or brownish powder or as the black sticky substance known on the streets as “black tar heroin.”

## FACTS ON HEROIN

### How is Heroin abused?

Heroin is injected, smoked, freebased (where pure forms of heroin are lit and the smoke inhaled), or snorted. All these methods can lead to addiction and other severe health problems. Injection is the most efficient way to administer low-purity heroin. The availability of high-purity heroin, however, and the fear of infection by sharing needles has made snorting and smoking the drug more common.

### How does Heroin affect the brain?

Heroin enters the brain very quickly and binds to many areas, especially those involved in the perception of pain and in reward. In addition, it binds to areas on the brain stem that control automatic processes such as breathing blood pressure and arousal. Because of this, heroin overdoses regularly involve the repression of breathing.

### What is a Heroin high?

Within 7 to 8 seconds, users report a surge of euphoria (“rush”) lasting anywhere from 5-8 minutes accompanied by dry mouth, a warm flushing of the skin, and a heaviness of the extremities. Following the euphoria, users report going “on the nod,” an alternatively wakeful and sleepy state. Users who don’t inject the drug may not experience the initial rush, but other effects are the same.

### How addictive is Heroin?

Heroin is **super-addictive**. This is because it enters the brain so quickly and affects the parts of the brain responsible for perception of pain and reward.

## HEALTH EFFECTS OF HEROIN

Heroin abuse is associated with serious health problems. Most common conditions include fatal overdoses, spontaneous abortions, and infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS and hepatitis.

Chronic users usually develop collapsed veins, infections of the heart lining and valves, abscesses, and liver and kidney diseases. Many other complications are known to develop due to the poor health of the user including various types of pneumonia.

In addition, to the effects of the drug itself, street heroin almost always contains toxic additives and chemicals that clog the blood vessels going to the lungs, liver, kidneys, or brain, causing permanent damage to vital organs.

## How can you tell if someone you know is using heroin?

### Signs and symptoms of heroin use are:

Track marks on arms	Slowed down respiration
Euphoria	Constricted pupils
Drowsiness	Nausea and vomiting
Impaired mental function	Slowed and slurred speech

### Signs of heroin overdose include:

Shallow breathing	Convulsions
Pinpoint pupils	Coma
Clammy skin	

# Heroin Withdrawal

With regular use, tolerance develops—meaning the user must use more heroin to achieve the same effect. As higher doses are used, physical dependence and addiction develop.

## Withdrawal symptoms include:

Drug Craving	Insomnia
Muscle and bone pain	Vomiting
Cold flashes	Kicking movements
Restlessness	and others...

Major withdrawal symptoms peak between 48 and 72 hours after the last dose and usually subside within a week although some symptoms may last for months. Sudden withdrawal for heavy users in poor health can sometimes be fatal.

## HEROIN IN HAWAII:

In both 2006 and 2007, drug enforcement seized 300 grams of Heroin in Hawaii. Most of the heroin seized in Hawaii is black tar heroin from Mexico. The primary entry point for heroin remains the Honolulu International Airport with body couriers from Mexico sneaking it in. Users get Heroin from street dealers in downtown Honolulu, Waikiki, and Chinatown with user amounts packaged in tin foil, balloons, and plastic wrap.

The heroin problem in Hawaii remains steady with no significant increases or decreases. In 2007, substance abuse treatment admissions for heroin totaled 181, or 2.1% of the total admissions in Hawaii, while about 5.5% of all drug related crime was heroin related.



## OPIATES

Opiates are made from opium, which comes from the poppy plant. Opiates produce a quick, intense feeling of pleasure followed by a sense of well-being and a calm drowsiness. But they can also become an addiction. Regular users of different opiates usually find themselves with an addiction.

Some opiates—like Vicodine and Oxycontin—are prescribed by physicians for the treatment of legitimate pain associated with such chronic conditions as cancer. Other opiates—such as heroin—are illegal substances. Even prescribed opiates can be abused if the user does not take them exactly as prescribed.

## Effects of Opiates:

Opiates function as central nervous system depressants, which slow down the responses - including the brain - to external stimuli. Depending on which opiate has been consumed, the user may:

Feel sedated, speak strangely, exhibit decreased ability to reason, slowed breathing, and impaired reflexes.

### Some Common Opiates:

- Heroin
- Morphine
- Oxycontin
- Methodone
- Hydrocodone
- Opium
- Codeine
- Vicodine

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All information was compiled by the Prevention Resource Center of Drug-Free Hawaii. Sources: www.drugabuse.gov; www.streetdrugs.org; www.sayno.com; NIDA Community Drug Alert Bulletin on Heroin, www.nida.nih.gov; Drug Enforcement Administration, www.usdoj.gov.

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