

Heroin: The Facts

Heroin is a white to dark brown powder or tar-like substance. This highly addictive drug is made from morphine, a substance from the opium poppy that quickly enters the brain. It affects the brain's pleasure systems and interferes with the ability to perceive pain.

Heroin has many street and slang terms. Known often as Big H, Blacktar, Brown Sugar, Dope, Horse, Junk, Mud, Skag, and Smack.

Heroin can be used many ways. Snorting (popular with new users), injecting into a vein ("mainlining") or into a muscle, smoked in a pipe or water pipe, mixed in a marijuana joint or regular cigarette, and inhaled as smoke through a straw (know as "chasing the dragon").

Heroin is super-addictive. Any method of use - snorting, smoking, swallowing, or injecting the drug can lead to mental and physical addiction. Breaking the habit is extremely difficult!

Heroin use can have tragic and deadly consequences. It slows the way you think, react, your memory, and the strength of heroin can vary making it unpredictable and deadly. There are also risks from sharing needles such as HIV, hepatitis B and C, and other diseases.

Signs of heroin use. A person might appear drowsy, have nausea, impaired mental functioning, slowed down respiration, and constricted pupils. Signs of an overdose are shallow breathing, pinpoint pupils, clammy skin, convulsions and coma.

Prolonged heroin abuse can cause serious health conditions. Collapsed veins, infection of the heart, abscesses, pneumonia, liver disease, infectious diseases and/or a fatal overdose (even when first used) can happen. In addition, street heroin may have been "cut" (mixed with other dangerous ingredients) that can be poisonous and result in clogging blood vessels that lead to the lungs, liver, kidneys or brain possibly causing infection or even death of cells in these vital organs.

For more information: www.DrugFreeNH.org



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Children's Hospital at Dartmouth, Injury Prevention Center, NH Department of Health and Human Services, NH Department of Education, NH Pediatric Society, SAFE KIDS NH & Partnership for a DrugFreeNH.org