

# Keeping it Current

## Raising Healthy Teens

# Heroin



Heroin is processed from morphine, a naturally occurring substance extracted from poppy plants. Heroin is a highly addictive drug. It is the most fast-acting and one of the most abused opiates. Heroin can be a white or brown powder or a black sticky substance known as black tar heroin.

### The Facts:

- In 2021, **13 percent of teens** in the United States reported using illicit drugs such as heroin, according to the CDC.
- Because heroin enters the brain so rapidly, it is particularly addictive, both psychologically and physically.
- Heroin users report feeling a surge of euphoria or “rush” followed by a twilight state of sleep and wakefulness.
- Heroin is injected, snorted, or smoked. Many new, younger users begin by snorting or smoking heroin because they wish to avoid the social stigma attached to injection drug use.
- Effects of heroin use include: • Drowsiness, respiratory depression, constricted pupils, nausea, a warm flushing of the skin, dry mouth, and heavy extremities

### The Risks

- **Overdose.** Both new and experienced users risk overdosing on heroin because they can't know the purity of the heroin they are using. Heroin overdoses—which can result whether the drug is snorted, smoked, or injected—can cause slow and shallow breathing, convulsions, coma, and even death.
- **Addiction.** All heroin users—not just those who inject the drug—risk becoming addicted.
- **Tolerance.** Individuals who abuse heroin over time develop a tolerance for the drug, meaning that they must use increasingly larger doses to achieve the same intensity or effect they experienced when they first began using the drug.
- **Withdrawal.** Addicted individuals who stop using the drug may experience withdrawal symptoms, which include heroin craving, restlessness, muscle and bone pain, and vomiting.
- **Bloodborne infections.** Heroin users who inject the drug expose themselves to additional risks, including contracting human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B and C, and other blood-borne viruses.
- Chronic users who inject heroin also risk scarred or collapsed veins, infection of the heart lining and valves, abscesses, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and liver and kidney disease

## Did you know?

### THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC BY THE NUMBERS



### Warning signs of use (physical and behavioral)

- Confusion and disorientation
- Impaired ability to concentrate or focus
- Significant unintentional weight loss
- Constricted pupils
- Labored or slow breathing
- Abnormally low heart rate
- Exhaustion and lethargy
- Watery eyes and runny nose
- Persistent flu-like symptoms
- Bruising or scabbing of the skin
- Finding needles or syringes when they have no other medical condition
- Burned silver spoons
- Plastic bags with traces of white powder
- Withdrawing from friends and family, or socially isolating themselves
- Bad personal hygiene
- Stealing from loved ones
- Wearing clothes that hide needle marks or skin irritation caused by scratching



VISIT US ONLINE: [AHC-STL.org](http://AHC-STL.org)

<https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/Heroin-2020.pdf>

<https://www.priorygroup.com/addiction-treatment/heroin-addiction/heroin-addiction-symptoms>

<https://www.newportacademy.com/resources/substance-abuse/teen-heroin-abuse/>

[https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/data/yrbs/yrbs\\_data\\_summary\\_and\\_trends.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/data/yrbs/yrbs_data_summary_and_trends.htm)