

Heroin

Imagine a life without heroin's grip on the physical, emotional, and financial well-being of you or the one you care for.

Millions of Americans try heroin at least once and for everyone who does, **CHANCES OF ADDICTION ARE VERY HIGH.**

Heroin is derived from morphine, extracted from the opium poppy plant. You can smoke, inject, or snort heroin, which usually appears as a brown or white powder. Because the drug is delivered to the brain very quickly, it interrupts receptors that tell us how we perceive pain and rewards. Heroin dependence can happen suddenly and is extremely difficult to stop without professional help and support.

SYMPTOMS OF HEROIN ABUSE

In addition to legal, social, and financial problems, heroin users struggle with the drug's physical effects. Heart infections, collapsed veins, lung problems, kidney disease, and gastrointestinal problems

are all common health conditions. Injecting heroin also places one at a higher risk of contracting diseases like HIV and hepatitis C. Signs of a loved one using heroin might include:

- Shallow breathing and disorientation
- Constriction of their pupils
- Poor hygiene or unkempt appearance
- Drug paraphernalia (syringes, pipes, baggies, aluminum foil)
- Needle marks or scars on their skin

Heroin overdose is a real danger. Signs include shallow or slow breathing, clammy skin, blue lips, and convulsions. A coma, permanent brain damage, or even death could result.

HEROIN TREATMENT

Though dependence can develop quickly, quitting heroin takes time. Withdrawal symptoms can include insomnia, cold flashes, diarrhea, vomiting, muscle pain, and restlessness.

When attempting to quit, consult a doctor to receive medical attention for withdrawal effects. An important first step is detoxification. Prescription medications like Methadone, Buprenorphine, and Naltrexone can help address heroin cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Behavioral treatment for heroin addiction is available in outpatient and residential programs. Professionals also highly encourage peer support and a 12-step program during recovery.

ACTION STEPS

✓ **Seek immediate help** – Be courageous and honest. Talk with your doctor or mental health professional. Consider bringing a family member or friend along to any appointments. Attempting to quit heroin use alone is never a good plan. Withdrawal symptoms can often be very extreme.

✓ **Remove** – Rid your home of all drugs and paraphernalia. Be sure to thoroughly clean and leave none of it behind. If this task proves too difficult or tempting, ask a friend or family member for help.

✓ **Avoid triggers** – People who encourage you to use heroin do not have your best interest in mind. Steer clear of any places you might feel tempted to use or people who promote drug use.

✓ **Peer support** – Joining a support group or a 12-step program will aid your recovery process and give you the encouragement you need to get clean and stay clean.

KEEP IN MIND

Life beyond heroin addiction is possible. Even if your loved one is not ready to stop using, there are still ways to help. Listen to any fears about their drug use and anxiety about quitting. Express your concerns and offer to connect them to a professional.

What steps might you, or the one you care for, take today to eliminate heroin use and enjoy a full and healthy life?