

What are the risks?

Using heroin has a number of different risks.

Psychological:

- Euphoria
- Psychosis
- Anxiety with continued use
- Paranoia
- Mood instability
- Dependency and addiction
- Depression
- Social isolation
- Short / long term memory loss
- Lack of motivation
- Suicidal thoughts
- Agitation
- Self esteem
- Low or little energy

Physical:

- Overdose and death
- Weakened immune system
- Transmission of BBV's
- Fertility and menstrual problems
- Itching (excoriated skin from scratching)
- Cold sweats
- Poor dental health, damaged teeth and gum swelling
- Muscular weakness, partial paralysis
- Respiratory (breathing) illnesses
- Severe constipation
- Poor appetite and malnutrition

Did you know?

A baby exposed to heroin in the mother's womb can be physically addicted to heroin.

Heroin and the law

Heroin is a class A drug, so it's illegal to have for yourself, give away or sell.

Possession is illegal and can get you up to seven years in jail and/or an unlimited fine. Supplying someone else (even your friends), can get you up to life imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

A conviction for a drug-related offence could have a serious impact. It can stop you visiting certain countries - for example the United States - and limit the types of jobs you can apply.

Find out more

If you would like more information or support on heroin or you are affected by someone else's use please contact us at Inclusion Recovery Hampshire.

Information is also available at:

NHS Website: www.nhs.uk

Talk to Frank Website: www.talktofrank.com

HOW TO CONTACT US

NORTH: 01782 639856
StarsNorth@mpft.nhs.uk

EAST: 01283 741053
StarsEast@mpft.nhs.uk

WEST: 01785 270080
StarsWest@mpft.nhs.uk

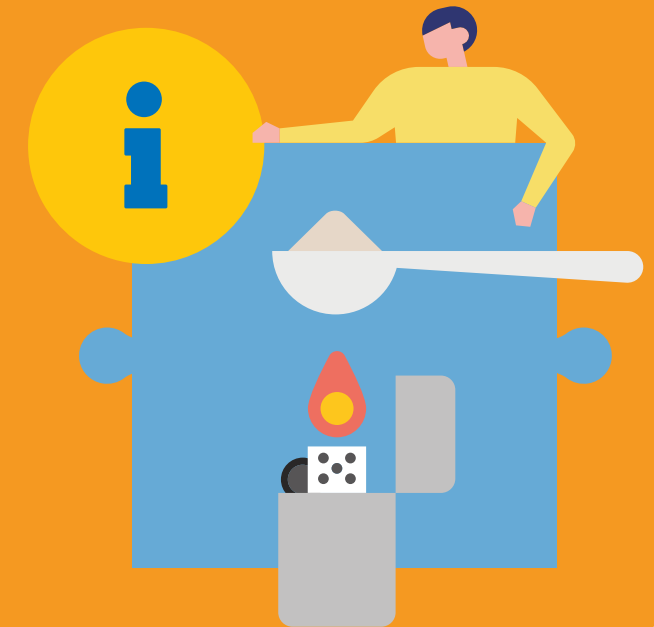
Or visit: www.staffstars.org

You. Me. Us

This leaflet was created by: **NHS inclusion** Part of Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust Find out more at www.inclusion.org

Heroin

What you need to know!



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What is heroin?

Heroin is a highly addictive drug processed from morphine, a naturally occurring substance extracted from an opium poppy.

- It's an opiate commonly used for its euphoric effects.
- Heroin is made from morphine, (which is extracted from the opium poppy).
- Opium was originally used to treat pain, sleeplessness and diarrhoea.
- It is typically sold as a white or brownish powder that is 'cut' with sugars, starch, powdered milk and lots more.

The myths

- You cannot get addicted if you smoke or snort heroin
- You become addicted instantly
- You only overdose when you inject it

The truth is addiction doesn't occur immediately as tolerance would need to develop. Dependence can occur regardless of route of consumption and you can overdose from any method of use not just injecting.

How is heroin taken?

There are a few ways of taking heroin: Smoking with tobacco in a 'joint' or 'spliff'.

Smoking on foil is known as 'chasing the dragon' it involves burning the drug on foil and breathing in the smoke.

Injecting into the vein with a needle and syringe.

Snorting heroin is often seen as less risky. However, no matter the use method, heroin is still highly addictive.

Sharing needles and syringes or other injecting equipment, when injecting, runs the risk of the injector catching or spreading HIV and hepatitis C infection. There is also the risk that veins may be damaged and of an abscess or blood clot developing.

It is often used alongside other drugs to help with the 'come down'.

What does it look like?

Pure heroin is a white powder, but due to the range of substances it's cut with, street heroin can be anything from off white to brown.

Heroin may be cut with highly-potent opioids which can kill. Substances including Fentanyl, benzodiazepines and barbiturates can be added to heroin.

It's common for heroin to be mixed with a variety of other substances, such as sugar, starch, powdered milk, quinine or paracetamol. This increases its weight and the drug dealer's profits.

Substances like nutmeg, brick dust and even ground-up gravel have also been reported on occasions.

Prices can vary from region to region, but it has an average price of £10 a bag.



What are the effects?

Heroin is highly addictive and people can become physically and psychologically dependant on it rapidly. Effects of using heroin can be both pleasant and unpleasant:

- Heroin gives users a feeling of warmth and well-being
- Bigger doses can make people sleepy and relaxed
- Heroin slows down the way the body works and is a very strong pain-killer
- The first dose of heroin can bring about dizziness and vomiting
- Effects can last for a number of hours
- Over time the effects on the brain cause cravings and a strong drive to keep using
- Sedation
- Increases feelings of pleasure by altering activity in the limbic system, which controls emotions

