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Alcohol & Drug
Treatment

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now.

Facts About Heroin

Your Brain

Heroin enters the brain quickly. It slows down the way you think, slows down reaction time and slows down memory. This affects the way you act and make decisions.

Your Body

Heroin poses special problems for those who inject it because of the risks of HIV, hepatitis B and C, and other diseases that can occur from sharing needles. These health problems can be passed on to sexual partners and newborns.

Super-Addictive

Heroin is highly addictive because it enters the brain so rapidly. It particularly affects those regions of the brain responsible for producing physical dependence.

It's Not What it May Seem

Despite the glamorization of "heroin chic" in films, fashion and music, heroin use can have tragic consequences that extend far beyond its users. Fetal effects, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, violence and crime are all linked to its use.

Know the Risks

Because the strength of heroin varies and its impact is more unpredictable when used with alcohol or other drugs, the user never knows what might happen with the next dose. Using Heroin is known to cause death, and is one of the most frequently reported drugs by medical examiners in drug abuse deaths. [Learn more about the risks of using heroin.](#)

Know the Law

Heroin is an illegal Schedule I drug, meaning that it is in the group of the most highly addictive drugs.

What Does Heroin Look Like?

The appearance of heroin can vary dramatically from one place to the next. In the eastern United States, heroin generally is sold as a powder that is white or an off-white color.

- Generally, the purer the heroin the whiter the color because variations in color result from the presence of impurities.
- It has been found that heroin can be mixed with other substances such as sugar, starch, or quinine. Heroin also can be mixed with poisons such as strychnine.

In the western United States, most of the



heroin available is a solid substance that is black in color.



- This type of heroin, known as black tar, may be sticky or hard to the touch.
- Powdered heroin that is a dirty brown color also is sold in the western United States.

Where Does Heroin Come From?

Heroin is processed from morphine, a naturally occurring substance extracted from the seed pod of certain varieties of poppy plants grown in: Southeast Asia (Thailand, Laos and Myanmar in Burma), Southwest Asia (Afghanistan and Pakistan), Mexico, and Colombia. Heroin comes in several forms, the main one being "black tar" from Mexico (found primarily in the western United States) and white heroin from Colombia (primarily sold on the East Coast).

How Do Users Take Heroin?

Many new, younger heroin users begin by snorting or smoking heroin because they wish to avoid the social stigma attached to injection drug use. These users often mistakenly believe that snorting or smoking heroin will not lead to addiction. Users who snort or smoke heroin at times graduate to injection because as their bodies become conditioned to the drug, the effects it produces are less intense.

They then turn to injection—a more efficient means of administering the drug—to try to attain the more intense effects they experienced when they began using the drug.

Heroin can be injected, snorted or smoked.

Where to look for heroin injection marks?

- Typically they are in an arm.
- That can change however as users try to hide their heroin abuse by injecting behind their knee, in their neck or under their tongue.

If you suspect someone you know of abusing heroin, alcohol or other substances, Gateway Foundation can help.

Call today to schedule a free confidential consultation 877-505-HOPE (4673).

The First Step: A Free, Confidential Consultation ([Learn More](#))
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