

# 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 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.

**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, but possible.

**Heroin use can have tragic and deadly consequences.** It slows the way you think and react, and dulls your memory. The strength of heroin varies and other substances are added to it making it unpredictable and deadly. A fatal overdose can happen even when first used. Other health risks from using heroin include HIV, hepatitis B and C, and other diseases.

**Signs of heroin use.** A person might appear drowsy ("*nodding*"), 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. Overdoses can be fatal, but appropriate medications can reverse the overdose. Immediate medical treatment saves lives.

**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 can happen.

**Treatment works and recovery is possible.** Methadone, buprenorphine and naltrexone are all FDA approved medications for the treatment of opioid use disorders. In addition, peer support groups are very helpful for people suffering from addictions.