

# HEROIN: HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?



## THE STARTLING FACTS

- Approximately 9.2 million people worldwide use heroin.
- Over the past several years, heroin overdoses have caused more deaths than traffic accidents.
- The average heroin addict spends between \$80 and \$200 per day to maintain his or her addiction.
- It can take just three days of regular heroin use to become addicted.

## DRUGS AND THE PLEASURE CENTER

- Excitement of the pleasure center in the brain promotes repetition of pleasurable or rewarding activities.
- Certain drugs excite the pleasure center, which is what makes them so addicting; they are more rewarding than such natural behaviors as eating.
- This reward triggers people to take drugs over and over again.

## RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS OF AN OVERDOSE

The chance of surviving an overdose is similar to surviving a heart attack – it depends on the speed of emergency medical assistance. Studies have shown that death occurs one to three hours after the victim has initially ingested or injected the drugs. Signs to look for include:

- Cold or clammy skin
- Bluish colored skin (in light-toned skin)
- Grayish or ashen skin (in dark-toned skin)
- Loss of consciousness
- Awake but unable to talk; difficulty speaking
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Slow, erratic, or non-existent heartbeat
- Limp body
- Vomiting
- Choking sounds or snore-like gurgling noise
- Seizures
- Pinpoint pupils
- Mental confusion

## FIND THE RIGHT RECOVERY OPTIONS

Treatment for heroin addiction can include a combination of the following:

**DETOXIFICATION (DETOX):** This is a type of medical care that manages withdrawal symptoms when you first stop using heroin or other substances. Withdrawal can be dangerous, so doctors and nurses at the facility will oversee your medical needs during this stage of treatment. In addition to medical care, detox facilities provide counseling, support groups, and referrals to after-detox treatment.

**REHABILITATION PROGRAMS (REHAB/CSS):**

Rehabilitation programs take place after detox. They are inpatient programs that last from 7 to 10 days. During these programs, you will participate in support groups to help you through your recovery process. Staff will be there to oversee your time in rehab.

**TRANSITIONAL SHELTERS (TSS):** After completing detox and rehab, a transitional shelter might be the next step in your recovery. A transitional shelter allows you to have a place to stay before going to a halfway house. It helps you to attend outpatient therapy and support groups. Staff at the shelter will help you to get to your therapy, medical, and support group appointments.

**HALFWAY HOUSES:** A halfway house is a treatment option for those who do not have a sober place to stay after going through detox and rehab. Here you will have the ability to live in a sober environment while continuing your recovery by attending outpatient therapy and community groups.

**OUTPATIENT THERAPY AND PSYCHIATRY:**

Individual and group therapy sessions are used to help you talk about ways to overcome your addiction, as well as provide emotional support and encouragement during the process. Individual therapy with a counselor can help you to learn to manage the thoughts and actions that lead you to using heroin or other substances. Group therapy can provide support from others going through recovery too.

**GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY:** There are many different free self-help groups that provide emotional support to people wanting to stay sober. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Smart Recovery, Community Recovery Centers, and online support groups are some options available to help in your recovery.

**MEDICATIONS:** There are different types of medicine that can help relieve your withdrawal symptoms and prevent use of addictive substances.

This is a common option for people overcoming their addiction to heroin or opiates. A list of common medications that are used to help in preventing use of addictive substances is below. Talk to your doctor for more information.

- Vivitrol (Naltrexone)
- Suboxone/Subtex/Buprenorphine
- Methadone

**FAMILY AND FRIENDS:** Family and friends can help in the recovery process. They can provide support and encouragement during the process. Having a good support system is very important to help overcome an addiction.

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Not sure which treatment is best for you or someone you know?  
Call Beacon Health Options at 888.204.5581.