



What is heroin?

Heroin is made from opium poppies. Street names include H, brown, gear and smack. It usually comes as a fine powder ranging from an off-white to brown colour.

How is heroin used?

Snorting: it dissolves slowly through the lining of the nostrils and enters the bloodstream.

Smoking: heated on foil, the fumes are inhaled via your lungs, affecting you almost immediately.

Injecting: dissolved in citric or ascorbic acid, it's a quick way to get a lot into your system. It's also the most dangerous way to take it.

What are the effects of heroin?

Heroin is a downer and makes you feel calm, relaxed, safe, and warm. It can also constipate you and make you feel sick – particularly the first few times you use it.

What are the problems with heroin?

Physical dependence: after regular use, you'll get withdrawal symptoms if you stop.

Overdose: Heroin slows your breathing and heart rate. It can be fatal to use more than you're used to, or from a more potent

batch than usual, or if you haven't used it for a while.

Mixing heroin with other downer drugs: you increase the risk of an overdose if you mix with methadone, alcohol, and benzodiazepines like diazepam (Valium) and temazepam.

Synthetic opioids: Heroin is increasingly mixed with drugs such as fentanyl and nitazenes, which are much more potent than and can significantly increase the chance of overdose.

Reduce the risks

Carry naloxone and use it to reverse an opioid overdose temporarily. The person overdosing still needs immediate medical help. If you think somebody is overdosing, put them in the recovery position (on their side) and call 999.

Don't use alone. Start with a small test dose. Test your drugs. Don't mix drugs. Stay hydrated.

The law

Heroin is an illegal Class A drug. Penalties for possession are up to 7 years in prison and an unlimited fine. Penalties for supply are up to life in prison and an unlimited fine.