

In case of an overdose, call an ambulance immediately (Dial "000")

Signs of a heroin overdose:

- a faint or slow pulse, or none at all
- snoring or gurgling in a person who appears to be asleep
- blue lips, toenails or fingernails
- lack of response if shaken or if name is called (doesn't wake up)
- no response to pain.

If the person is unconscious:

- move them to a safe place if they are in danger
- make sure that an ambulance has been called
- place the person on their side and bend the top leg, bringing it up so it rests in front of their body (this will prevent the person from rolling onto their back)
- check to see that the person is breathing properly. You may need to tilt the head back to open the airways, and clear the airways if they are obstructed by vomit, etc.
- if the person isn't breathing, perform "mouth to mouth" immediately and wait for the ambulance.

Remember, getting someone to hospital quickly could save their life. Call "000" immediately and ask for an ambulance. Police are only called to an overdose if there is any danger to the ambulance officers or if the person dies.

Help & Information

Help and advice about heroin in NSW is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from **The Alcohol and Drug Information Service**. ADIS provides counselling, advice and referral services. You don't have to give your name, and anything you say is confidential. **This service is not connected to the NSW Police Service.**

ADIS Numbers

Sydney metropolitan areas:
9361-8000

Country areas (free call):
1-800-422-599

Phone numbers for other drug and alcohol services and Community Health Centres in your area can be found in the index of the White Pages and your local telephone directory.

In trouble with the law?

Legal Aid Helpline (Freecall): 1800 806 913
Legal Aid Hotline for under 18s (Freecall): 1800 101 810
Aboriginal Legal Service: 02 9318 2122

"Street" names for Heroin

Smack, horse, junk, skag, shit, brown, Harry, boy, "H"

Common terms

Kit: a needle/syringe and spoon used for heroin injection.

Line/Rail: a dose of heroin, chopped and drawn into a line/rail for inhaling.

Snort/Toot: to inhale heroin into the nose using a rolled piece of paper, straw or glass tube.

Speedball/Fireball: a mixture of heroin and cocaine.

heroin and the Law



heroin

Heroin and The Law

You are breaking the law if you possess, use, make, import or sell heroin. In NSW, if you are found guilty of possessing or using heroin, you could get a fine of up to \$5,000, and/or other penalties including community service work or a term in prison of up to 2 years. These penalties apply to both adults and young people aged between 10 and 18 years.

For making, importing or selling heroin, the penalties are more severe. The severity of the penalty depends on the amount of heroin, if it was being sold, and if you have prior convictions.

You will get a **criminal record** if you are found guilty of possessing, making or selling heroin. This makes it hard to get a job, a credit card, or a visa to travel to other countries.

Young Offenders Act 1997 - Drug Amendments

Changes to the *Young Offenders Act* allow police to divert young people aged between 10 and 18 years from the courts for minor drug offences, including the possession of up to one gram of heroin. Police can now deal with these matters by a formal warning, caution or youth justice conference. The way it is dealt with by the police will depend on the young person, their criminal record and the seriousness of the offence.

What about driving?

It is against the law and dangerous to drive a car or operate machinery under the influence of heroin or other drugs. Even low doses of heroin can affect your concentration, coordination and reflexes, and your ability to make sensible decisions.

Police have the power to detain drivers suspected of being under the influence of drugs and have them blood and/or urine tested at a hospital. If you drive under the influence of drugs you could lose your license, get a fine or go to prison

What is heroin?

Heroin is a white, pink or brown powder or rock made from the resin of the opium poppy. It can be smoked, sniffed ("snorted"), or mixed with water and injected.

What does it do?

Heroin is a narcotic drug that slows breathing and heart rate, reduces energy, reduces pain and feelings and emotions.

The immediate effect is a "rush", followed by feelings of warmth, comfort and pleasure. The unpleasant side effects include loss of appetite, restlessness, nausea, vomiting, constipation, and a racing heart. High doses cause extreme drowsiness and problems with breathing, which can lead to unconsciousness and even death.

When injected, effects are more rapid than if sniffed or smoked. Because it's hard to know how pure the heroin is, there is a risk of overdose regardless of how little is used. Heroin is often mixed with other things like sugar and talcum powder which can also cause problems if injected.

What about long-term or heavy use?

Heroin is very addictive. Long-term or heavy use can lead to addiction. If that happens, buying and using heroin can take over your life. Eventually you need heroin just to feel "normal". You can quickly build up a tolerance to heroin, which means you need to take more to get the same effect. This can be very dangerous.

As heroin reduces your appetite, you can become sick due to a poor diet. Using heroin will reduce your performance at work or school. A heroin addiction can be very expensive and lead to further crime to support the habit. This may damage your relationships with family and friends. Withdrawal from heroin can also make you depressed and suicidal.

Heroin use can result in:

- overdose and even death
- anxiety and paranoia
- depression and mood swings
- confusion
- self-neglect (not looking after yourself)
- lowered resistance to disease
- serious viral infections such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS (when injected)
- blood infections (when injected)

- heart and chest problems, including pneumonia
- low sex drive
- for men: impotence
- for women: menstrual problems, premature labour in pregnant women, harm to unborn infants

Can I reduce the risks?

If you inject heroin always use **new** needles and other equipment and never share needles or other equipment with other users. Sharing needles or using a used needle greatly increases your risk of getting HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and blood poisoning.

If you are going to use heroin:

- don't use too much (use a little at first - you can always use more later)
- don't take heroin with alcohol or any other drug and don't use any other drug if you have already used heroin
- make sure you're with someone who's not using so they can get help if anything goes wrong
- always use new equipment

Heroin Addiction

Heroin is a very addictive drug, and the effects of withdrawal vary depending on how long and how much is used. Symptoms of heroin withdrawal begin within 4-6 hours after last use. Symptoms can be mild, like the flu, or extremely distressing including shaking, sweating, vomiting, muscle aches and pains, chills, stomach pains and cramps, and diarrhoea. Symptoms normally fade after 7-10 days, but you can feel weak, unwell, and have intense cravings for heroin for months.

If you've stopped taking heroin and then start again, your tolerance will be lower. Using the same amount before you stopped will increase your risk of overdose and death.

What if I mix heroin with alcohol or other drugs?

Your chance of overdose or death is much higher if you mix heroin with alcohol or other drugs. Even regular heroin users

are at risk of overdose if they mix heroin with alcohol or other drugs. Taking heroin with alcohol and benzos e.g. serepax, rohypnol is especially dangerous.

What if I use heroin while I'm pregnant?

Taking heroin while pregnant is dangerous to your health and that of your unborn baby. It increases your risk of low iron in your blood, heart disease, pneumonia, hepatitis, miscarriage and other birth problems.

For your baby there is a risk of low birth weight, premature birth and death. Heroin passes through the placenta to your unborn baby. Your baby can be born drug addicted and suffer from withdrawal and long-term health problems. Pregnant women who are using heroin should see their doctor or hospital.

If you are pregnant and decide to stop taking heroin, see your doctor immediately. Suddenly stopping heroin use can hurt your unborn baby and cause premature labour. Your doctor can help you manage your addiction so there is less risk of harm to your baby. If you need more information ADIS (see back) can put you into contact with a drugs and pregnancy specialist.

