



## Opiates (Heroin)

<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Heroin is a morphine derivative. In pure form it is a white powder with a bitter taste. Street heroin may vary in colour depending on impurities and additives.
<b>MODE OF ADMINISTRATION</b>	Historically heroin was most frequently administered intravenously by injecting it. Today, heroin is mostly inhaled intra-nasally by snorting it or orally by smoking it.
<b>PRIMARY EFFECT</b>	Central nervous system depressant and analgesic.
<b>SHORT-TERM EFFECTS</b>	<p>The effects of heroin use are experienced within 7 to 8 seconds when injected and within a couple of minutes when snorted or smoked. The following effects are usually present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Slow and irregular heart beat and irregular blood pressure;</li><li>• Increased feelings of warmth, intense pleasure and dulling of pain;</li><li>• Constricted pupils and reduced night vision;</li><li>• Relaxation and drowsiness;</li><li>• Slurred speech;</li><li>• Dry mouth;</li><li>• Itchy skin (especially the face and nose);</li><li>• Slowed breathing;</li><li>• Delayed reaction time;</li><li>• Loss of concentration and diminished short-term memory;</li><li>• Impaired judgment;</li><li>• Constipation and loss of appetite;</li><li>• Reduced sex drive;</li><li>• Possible injury when incapacitated;</li><li>• In large doses, nausea, vomiting, respiratory paralysis, heart attack, stroke, anaphylactic shock, coma and death;</li><li>• Overdose likely when used concurrently with other central nervous system depressants such as alcohol.</li></ul>
<b>LONG-TERM EFFECTS</b>	<p>Heavy and continued use can lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skin infections (including dry and itchy skin, and skin abscesses);</li><li>• Fatigue;</li><li>• Respiratory problems (including labored or noisy breathing due to excessive fluid in the lungs);</li><li>• Scarring and collapse of veins if injecting;</li><li>• Extreme withdrawal when not using (including hypothermia, stomach cramps, insomnia, diarrhea and vomiting);</li><li>• Cognitive impairments (including concentration, attention and memory);</li><li>• Malnutrition and muscle wasting (including suppression of the immune system);</li><li>• Psychiatric complications (including depression, anxiety, sexual dysfunction, insomnia, psychosis and suicidal behaviour);</li><li>• Increased risk of contracting hepatitis and HIV when sharing needles;</li><li>• Risk of injury.</li></ul>
<b>ADDICTION POTENTIAL</b>	High psychological and physical addiction potential.
<b>TREATMENT OPTIONS</b>	In cases of heavy and prolonged use, inpatient and/or outpatient treatment with the use of multiple therapeutic methods (individual, family and group psychotherapy) is usually necessary to achieve lasting abstinence. Withdrawal symptoms are treated medically and co-morbid conditions are treated if required.