

Heroin addiction and its effects



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The aim of this assignment is to explain about the drug Heroin, its addiction, describing its short and long term effects. Which are illustrated in diagrams below and to give a better understanding of the drug. This topic of discussion has taken an interest as Heroin addiction is on the rise in Longford and it has led to the fatality of one person of whom I went to school with due to a Heroin overdose. Heroin is a highly addictive drug which comes from morphine, which is obtained from the opium poppy.

It is a “downer” or depressant that affects the brain’s pleasure systems and interferes with the brain’s ability to perceive pain. It looks like a white to dark brown powder or tar-like substance. Some of the street names or slang terms used are H, Brown, Dope, Skag, Smac. It can be used many different ways, depending on the person’s preference and the purity of the drug. Heroin can be injected into a vein (mainlining), injected into a muscle, smoked in a water pipe or standard pipe, mixed in a marijuana joint or regular cigarette, inhaled as smoke through a straw, known as “chasing the dragon,” snorted as powder via the nose.

What are its short-term effects? The short-term effects of heroin abuse appear soon after a single dose and disappear in a few hours. After an injection of heroin, the user reports feeling a surge of euphoria (“rush”) accompanied by a warm flushing of the skin, a dry mouth, and heavy extremities. Following this initial euphoria, the user goes “on the nod,” an alternately wakeful and drowsy state. Mental functioning becomes clouded due to the depression of the central nervous system.

Other effects included slowed and slurred speech, slow gait, constricted pupils, droopy eyelids, impaired night vision, vomiting, constipation. What are its long-term effects? The long-term effects of heroin appear after repeated use for some period of time. Chronic users may develop collapsed veins, infection of the heart lining and valves, abscesses, cellulites, and liver disease. Pulmonary complications, including various types of pneumonia, may result from the poor health condition of the abuser, as well as from heroin's depressing effects on respiration.

Street heroin may have additives that do not dissolve resulting in clogging the blood vessels that lead to the lungs, liver, kidneys, or brain. This can cause infection or even death of small patches of cells in vital organs. With regular heroin use, tolerance develops. Abusers must use more heroin to achieve the same intensity or effect. Higher doses are used over time, physical dependence and addiction develop. With physical dependence, the body has adapted to the presence of the drug and withdrawal symptoms may occur if use is reduced or stopped.

Withdrawal, which in regular abusers may occur as early as a few hours after the last administration, produces drug craving, restlessness, muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea and vomiting, cold flashes with goose bumps ("cold turkey"), kicking movements ("kicking the habit"), and other symptoms. Major withdrawal symptoms peak between 48 and 72 hours after the last dose and subside after about a week. Sudden withdrawal by heavily dependent users who are in poor health can be fatal. Heroin is a highly dangerous and addictive drug which has serious physical and physiological effects described above.

Heroin addiction is on the rise in Longford. From my personal knowledge it has led to the fatality of one person of whom I went to school with. For this reason part of many I have chosen to give a detailed report on the drug to try and understand it better. From my findings it scares me to realize the hold heroin has on a person both physically and psychologically. Once a person becomes an addict it is a constant struggle and the chances becoming drug free again are very slim although in some cases people have beaten the drug but in a lot of cases sadly the end result is fatal.