

Heroin: Factsheet



Evidence ratings:

This resource has undergone expert review. See our [Help/Q&A section](#) for more details.

Year: Year 9–10, Year 11–12

Targeted Drugs: Heroin

Tags: opiates, smack

Time Allocated: Partial lesson (under 45mins)

Origin: Australian

Cost:

Free

Attachments

[Heroin: Detailed Resource \(for Parents/Teachers\)](#)

What is Heroin?

Heroin is also known as hammer, gear, or smack.

Heroin is one of a group of drugs known as opiates. They are natural products of the opium poppy and also include opium, morphine, and codeine.

In Australia, heroin can be a fine powder, granules or rocks. It is normally white or off-white in colour, although it is sometimes brown. It is normally injected, but is also snorted, smoked, or heated and the vapours inhaled (chasing the dragon). It can be sold 'cut' (mixed) with a range of substances that can also be harmful. This makes it hard for the user to know the purity of what's being taken.

Heroin is considered to be the second most addictive drug after tobacco.

How many young people have tried Heroin?

According to the 2017 Australian secondary schools' survey, 1 in 100 students (1%) aged 12-17 used heroin in the past month.

What are the effects of Heroin?

Heroin produces a 'rush' within seconds of injecting or smoking it. If snorted, it takes about 5 minutes to feel the effects. The effects of heroin can last for approximately 3–5 hours.

The effects of heroin can be immediate or long-term, as listed in the table below.

Immediate	Long-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small ('pinned') pupils • Drowsiness and sedation (a state of calm or sleep) • Pain relief • Feeling of euphoria (a 'high') • Feelings of detachment • Nausea and vomiting • Overdose • Coma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependence (addiction) • Dental problems • Constipation • If injected there is an increased risk of infections like Hepatitis C and HIV • Infertility • Social problems, such as falling-out with friends • Financial issues such as debt and poverty

Evidence Base

This factsheet was developed following expert review by researchers at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney, the National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, and the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University.

Download attachment for more information and a list of sources.

Page last reviewed: 28 November 2019.