

Treating Heroin Addiction



The best treatment for heroin addiction, or heroin-use disorder, will depend on your needs. But certain medicines along with behavioral therapy may be most helpful. Detoxification is often the first step. It helps ease symptoms while your body adjusts to a drug-free state.

Methadone and other antinarcotic medicines

Today, there are many opioid replacement medicines that can vastly improve your success in staying away from heroin. Methadone has been used to treat heroin-use disorder for more than 30 years. It works by relieving your craving for the drug. When used as prescribed, it doesn't make you tired or groggy. And it doesn't affect your normal routine. You take methadone once a day. Instead of methadone, you may use newer medicines such as naltrexone or buprenorphine. These work in different ways to help you limit your use.

Behavioral therapy

Many types of behavioral therapy can be used to treat heroin-use disorder. Some therapies help change the way you think and act. Others, such as contingency management therapy, reward you for staying drug-free. These treatments may be part of a residential or outpatient program. In a residential program, you live with others who have the same problem. You may stay in treatment for 3 to 6 months. As an outpatient, you get therapy while living your normal life.



Self-help groups

These groups offer support and encouragement. They are a lifeline throughout recovery. At first, you may go to meetings every day. Later, you may go only when you need extra support. There are also groups for the loved ones of people addicted to and recovering from illegal drugs.

Where can I find help?

Recovery from heroin-use disorder isn't easy. But you don't have to do it alone. Talk with a healthcare provider or addiction counselor. Or try the resources listed below.

To learn more

Drug treatment programs and mental health clinics are listed in your phone book. Look for groups such as Narcotics Anonymous. Other resources to try:

- **[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](http://www.samhsa.gov/about-us/contact-us)** at www.samhsa.gov/about-us/contact-us or 800-662-4357

- [National Institute on Drug Abuse at www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

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