
Heroin Overdose Data

What is Heroin?

Heroin is a synthetic, highly addictive opioid that can produce intense feelings of euphoria.

Heroin Use

Heroin use has been increasing in recent years among men and women, most age groups, and all income levels. Some of the greatest increases have occurred in demographic groups with historically low rates of heroin use: women, the privately insured, and people with higher incomes. In particular, heroin use has more than doubled in the past decade among young adults aged 18 to 25 years.¹

Heroin-Related Overdose Deaths

As heroin use has increased, so have heroin-related overdose deaths:

- Heroin-related overdose deaths have more than tripled since 2010.
- From 2013 to 2014, heroin overdose death rates increased by 26%, with more than 10,500 people dying in 2014.
- In 2013, non-Hispanic whites aged 18 to 44 years had the highest rate for heroin overdose death (7.0 per 100,000).

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Risk Factors

Past misuse of prescription opioids is the strongest risk factor for starting heroin use – especially among people who became dependent upon or abused prescription opioids in the past year.² This indicates that the transition from prescription opioid non-medical use to heroin use may be part of the progression to addiction.

- More than nine in 10 people who used heroin in also used at least one other drug.
- Among new heroin users, approximately three out of four report having abused prescription opioids prior to using heroin.

Increased availability, relatively low price (compared to prescription opioids), and high purity of heroin in the U.S. also have been identified as possible factors in the rising rate of heroin use. According to data from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the amounts of heroin confiscated each year at the southwest

border of the United States were approximately ≤ 500 kg during 2000–2008. This amount quadrupled to 2,196 kg in 2013.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Vital Signs: Today's Heroin Epidemic – More People at Risk, Multiple Drugs Abused. (<http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/heroin/index.html>) MMWR 2015.
2. Compton WM, Jones CM, and Baldwin GT. Understanding the Relationship between Prescription Opioid and Heroin Abuse. NEJM.



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GUIDELINE FOR PRESCRIBING
OPIOIDS FOR CHRONIC PAIN

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