

Why is heroin so addictive?

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Heroin is one of the most extremely addictive drugs on the planet, and its use by Americans is rising.

According to the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#), the number of total heroin overdose deaths rose from 2,089 in 2002 to 13,219 in 2016. That's an increase of *533 percent* — a shocking number.

Naturally, the first question that arises from statistics like these is *why heroin is so addictive?* It's obvious that those who try the drug have trouble getting off of it almost right away. What's going on?

Before delving into the science of why heroin is so addictive, let's first discuss what exactly heroin is.

What Is Heroin?

Like morphine, OxyContin, codeine, hydrocodone, and methadone, heroin is a drug derived from opium. In fact, heroin actually comes from morphine, which itself comes from the seed pod of the opium poppy. Opium poppies grow naturally in countries like Colombia, Mexico, and Southwest and Southeast Asia.

Heroin is an illegal drug, but it is still readily available and sold on the black market. It generally comes as a brown or white powder, but it may also be distributed as "black tar heroin," a sticky black substance that is actually black because it is processed improperly and full of impurities.

Heroin is usually injected into the muscles, veins, or beneath the skin, but it can also be sniffed, smoked, or snorted. On the streets, the drug is often called the following:

- Horse
- Smack
- Hell Dust
- Big H

The Addictiveness of Heroin

[Heroin addiction](#) starts almost immediately after someone uses the drug. In fact, just one or two “hits” can set an individual on the road to addiction right away.

That’s because humans already have [opioid receptors](#) in the brain, and remember that heroin is a form of an opioid. When someone takes heroin, the drug enters the brain quickly and binds directly to those receptors. This enhances their power many times over to decrease pain and worry. It also slows down breathing and heart rate.

These short-term effects coincide with a rush of euphoria and contentedness in the user, and all of these seemingly positive effects tell the brain and the body that “heroin is great,” setting in motion severe addictive patterns.

For those with depression, bipolar disorder, or other mental disorders or personal struggles, this is a recipe for disaster. As those struggling with addiction to continue to use heroin on a regular basis, the addiction only grows stronger. Any attempts to stop using the drug result in extremely uncomfortable and painful withdrawal symptoms, making it nearly impossible to stop using the drug without professional intervention and help.

Contact Pathways Real Life Recovery Today

Are you or a loved one struggling with heroin abuse? If so, know that you’re not alone. As you can see, becoming addicted to this illicit drug is not something that people usually do by choice. The good news is that *by choice*, you *can choose* to kick your heroin addiction and achieve a sober lifestyle.

The only way to completely stop abusing heroin and achieve sobriety is to attend a professional drug rehab center like Pathways Real Life Recovery.

Pathways Real Life Recovery in Utah offers full addiction recovery treatment for individuals who are struggling with heroin addiction, [depression](#), and related mental health issues in Utah. Through intensive counseling and mental health assistance, we can help you or your loved one break through the cycle of shame and guilt in order to dig deep and find the core reasons for your addiction.

Our process of recovery does not abide by a one-size-fits-all approach to care. To the contrary, we work closely with each one of our patients to come up with a [personalized program](#) that will meet their unique needs. *Your success is our success.*

To learn more about the treatment programs that we offer, call us today at 801.895.3006. One of our treatment specialists would be happy to speak with you about your treatment options.

Remember, it’s never too late to get help for [heroin addiction](#). Call today.