

Heroin Fact Sheet

“[Heroin]... is one of the most widely used illegal drugs in the world, and is reported to account for more than \$120 billion dollars in global sales each year” (p. 260)

“Heroin is thought to be associated with some of the highest mortality rates and most emergency room visits of any of the illegal drugs of abuse in the United States.” (p. 260)

“92% of the world’s heroin is produced in Afghanistan.” (p. 261)

“When Heroin first enters the U.S., it can be up to 95% pure; by the time it is sold to users, its [heroin] purity can be as low as 3% or as high as 70%.” (p. 262)

“Heroin is usually cut with Quinine or Fentanyl... these additional opiates or narcotics laced with heroin can cause acute pulmonary edema [fluid in the lungs] as well as respiratory depression.” (p. 262)

“Death associated with heroin injection is usually due to the simultaneous use of alcohol or barbiturates and frequently occurs after an addict has gone weeks or months without the drug and injects the same amount of heroin he/she used before, not realizing tolerance has worn off.” (p. 262)

“Some addicts become fixated on the drug’s paraphernalia, especially the needle. They can get a psychological ‘high’ from playing with the needle and syringe. The injection process and syringe plunger action appears to have sexual overtones for them.” (p.263)

“Three factors that likely contribute to the association between heroin and crime include: 1) the use of heroin and its pharmacological effects encourage antisocial behavior that is crime related. Depressants such as heroin diminish inhibition and cause people to engage in activities they normally would not. The effects of heroin and its withdrawal make addicts self-centered, demanding, impulsive, and governed by their ‘need’ for the drug. 2) Because heroin addiction is expensive, the user is forced to resort to crime to support the drug habit. 3) A similar personality is driven to engage both criminal behavior and heroin use. Often, heroin addicts start heroin use about the same time they begin to become actively involved in criminal activity.” (p.263)

“There are two major stage of psychological dependence on heroin or other opioid narcotics: 1) Euphoria and positive effects occur at least 50% of users. These positive feelings increase with continued administration and encourage use. 2) Eventually, the heroin or narcotic user must take the drug to avoid the withdrawal symptoms that start 6 to 12 hours after the first dose.” (p. 264)

“Withdrawal symptoms usually start within 4 to 6 hours with runny nose, tears, and cramps; 12 - 48 hours without use include loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and fever; 2-4 days without use include the continued symptoms from above with additional aching bones

and muscle spasms; 4-5 days without use include symptoms start to subside with appetite back. The severity of symptoms depends on the purity and strength of the drug use.” (p. 266)

“In the real world, treatment of heroin dependency is considered successful if the addict does the following: 1) stops using heroin 2) no longer associates with dealers or users of heroin 3) avoids dangerous activities often associated with heroin use 4) Improves employment status 5) refrains from criminal activity 6) is able to enjoy normal family and social relationships.” (p. 267)

Above Referenced from:

Hanson, G. R., Venturelli, P.J., Fleckenstein, A.E. (2012). *Drugs and society*. Burlington, MA: Jones & Barlett Learning.

“In 2011, 4.2 million Americans aged 12 or older (or 1.6 percent) had used heroin at least once in their lives. It is estimated that about 23 percent of individuals who use heroin become dependent on it.”

For more info visit: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/heroin>



For more information visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/heroin/>