

# Opioids

## Heroin

Smack, Dope, Brown Sugar,  
Junk, Down, Big H, China White

### What is it?

Heroin is an opioid drug that alters perception of pain. It slows down heart rate, breathing, thoughts or feelings. It is made in illegal labs and it varies in strength.

### Why do people use it?

- ◆ Decrease anxiety and inhibition
- ◆ Physical or emotional pain management
- ◆ Relief from anxiety or traumatic experiences
- ◆ Euphoria
- ◆ Physical or emotional dependence

### How does it work?

Once opioids are absorbed into the bloodstream, they travel to the brain and act as a painkiller that the body would naturally produce when injured. This affects people differently. Some people may feel overly relaxed and drowsy.

### What can go wrong?

- ◆ Extreme drowsiness or overdose.
- ◆ Coma.
- ◆ Loss of memory, decision making ability and verbal fluency.
- ◆ Purity and actual content of heroin bought on the street is unpredictable. Fentanyl contamination is common.

Information adapted from [heretohelp.ca](http://heretohelp.ca), [camh.ca](http://camh.ca) & [towardtheheart.com](http://towardtheheart.com)  
For more information visit their websites.  
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## Harm Reduction

1. Don't use opioids with other substances, especially alcohol.
2. Take a small amount to start. Starting with a little amount lowers the risk of overdose. You can always use a bit more, but can't change your mind and take less.
3. Be prepared in the event of overdose. **Have Naloxone on hand.** Use with trusted people, in a familiar place. If you use alone, have someone check on you. Use overdose prevention sites when possible.
4. Choose safer methods of use. Injecting has the highest risk. If injecting, wash your hands. Rotate the injection site, avoiding the neck, hands and feet. Clean the injection site, use clean needles, and avoid sharing them.
5. If snorting, avoid sharing straws. Rinsing the nose before and after will reduce irritation.
6. If smoking, wash your hands, start with a small amount, use a shatterproof glass pipe and your own mouthpiece, inhale slowly and exhale immediately.

## Overdose

### What to look for:

1. Not moving and can't be woken
2. Slow or not breathing
3. Choking, gurgling sounds or snoring
4. Blue lips or nails
5. Cold or clammy skin
6. Tiny pupils
7. Vomiting

### What to do:

# CALL 9-1-1

### Follow the **SAVE ME** steps below to respond.



If the person must be left unattended at any time, put them in the recovery position.



**Stimulate**  
Unresponsive? **CALL 911**



**Airway**



**Ventilate**  
1 breath every 5 seconds



**Evaluate**



**Muscular Injection**  
1 mL of naloxone



**Evaluate**  
2nd dose?

Source: Toward the Heart - BC Center for Disease

## Discovery Youth & Family Substance Use Services

Victoria/South Island: 250-519-5313  
Cowichan Valley: 250-737-2029  
Nanaimo/Ladysmith: 250-739-5790  
Oceanside area: 250-947-8215  
Mt Waddington area: 250-902-6063

