



**CONNECTICUT
Clearinghouse**
a program of the Connecticut Center
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Heroin Use and Methadone Treatment

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

Heroin Use & Dependence

Heroin is an opioid drug that is made from morphine, a naturally occurring substance extracted from the seed pod of the Asian opium poppy plant. Heroin can appear as a white or brown powder or as a black sticky substance. People use heroin to get high by injecting it, sniffing/snorting, or smoking. Regular use can lead to tolerance. People who have developed a dependency and try to stop using on their own, will experience withdrawal symptoms, including restlessness, muscle and joint pain, diarrhea, vomiting, and cold flashes. It's important to seek treatment for heroin dependency.

Heroin Use – Data, Trends

The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that the number of people in the United States using heroin has been on the rise. In particular, young adults ages 18-25 are the demographic group showing the greatest increase in use.

Geographically, heroin use is no longer just an urban problem, as use has spread to rural and suburban communities.

According to the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), approximately 669,000 Americans reported using heroin in the prior year. In addition, first time use doubled over six years: in 2006, data show that 90,000 people started using heroin. In 2012, the number rose to 156,000 people.

CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report *Increases in Heroin Overdose Deaths – 28 States, 2010 to 2012* shows that the death rate for heroin overdose doubled. The demographics for drug

deaths involving heroin have also changed over time. In 2000, non-Hispanic black persons aged 45-64 had the highest rate for drug poisoning deaths involving heroin, while in 2013, non-Hispanic white persons aged 18-44 had the highest rate.

Data for 2013 also show that the number of drug poisoning deaths involving heroin was about four times higher for men than women.

In Connecticut, the number of heroin-related deaths has been rising. There were 195 heroin-related deaths in 2012. In 2013, the number rose to 284 and in 2014, there were 374 heroin-related deaths.

Methadone – An Evidence-Based Treatment

For over 40 years, methadone has been used as a treatment for heroin addiction. Methadone is a long-acting synthetic opioid agonist medication. It is effective in preventing withdrawal symptoms and reducing craving in opioid addicted individuals, which in turn, reduces relapse. The medication is taken orally so that it reaches the brain slowly. There are no intoxicating effects, allowing people to resume normal life activities such as going to work. Methadone is available only through specially licensed opioid treatment facilities, where it is dispensed to patients on a daily basis.

Combination Therapy and Integrated Treatment

Research indicates that methadone maintenance is more effective combined with individual and/or group therapy, and treatment outcomes are better when patients receive or are referred to medical, psychiatric, psychological and social services.

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Sources:

National Institute on Drug Abuse
www.easyread.drugabuse.gov/heroin-facts.php

National Institute on Drug Abuse Research Report Series: Heroin
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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – NCHS Data Brief: Drug Poisoning Deaths Involving Heroin: United States, 2000-2013
www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db190.htm

Connecticut Accidental Drug Intoxication Deaths - Office of the State Medical Examiner
www.ct.gov/ocme/lib/ocme/tox_summary_2012-14.pdf

National Institute on Drug Abuse
Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide (Third Edition)
www.drugabuse.gov/publications/principles-drug-addiction-treatment-research-based-guide-third-edition/acknowledgments