

Drinking alcohol or taking drugs while you are pregnant could cause:

- Miscarriage
- Going into labour early
- Low birth weight

Drinking alcohol or taking drugs while you are pregnant or breastfeeding may also cause your baby to suffer from:

- Drug addiction
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Attention and/or learning difficulties
- Facial abnormalities
- Damaged organs and limbs

If you, a family member, or a friend want 'Help and support' turn to the back page.

Possession, use and distribution of heroin is illegal within Australia.

Help and support

DirectLine

Tel: 1800 888 236

24 hours, 7 days a week

Confidential AOD counselling and referral line

Family Drug Help

Tel: 1300 660 068

Monday to Friday 9am-9pm

Youth Support & Advocacy Service

Tel: 1800 014 446

24 hour toll free service

Service for people aged 12 – 21 years

Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre

Tel: 03 8413 8413

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

Freecall: 1800 064 865

Harm Reduction Victoria

Tel: 03 9329 1500

Australian Drug Foundation

www.druginfo.adf.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Tel: 03 9411 9411

www.vaccho.org.au

Read more about other drugs within your community in the *Healthy Spirit, Healthy Community* booklet, available at vaccho.org.au.



A guide to heroin within our community



Healthy Spirit, Healthy Community



australian
drug FOUNDATION



Heroin

Street names

Smack, gear, hammer, the dragon, H, dope, junk, harry, horse, black tar, white dynamite, homebake, china white, Chinese H, poison, Dr Harry.

How is heroin used?

Heroin is usually injected into a vein, but it's also smoked ('chasing the dragon'), and added to cigarettes and yandri. The effects are usually felt straight away. Heroin is also known to be snorted – the effects take around 10 to 15 minutes to feel if it's used in this way.

Effects of heroin

The effects of heroin usually last for three to five hours.

Heroin affects everyone differently, but you may experience:

- Intense pleasure and pain relief
- Relaxation, drowsiness and clumsiness
- Confusion
- Slurred and slow speech
- Slow breathing and heart beat
- Dry mouth
- Tiny pupils
- A reduced appetite and vomiting
- A decreased sex drive

Injecting heroin and sharing needles may also cause:

- Tetanus
- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- HIV/AIDS

If you have a lot (or get a strong batch), you may also experience:

- Trouble concentrating
- Falling asleep ('going on the nod')
- Slow breathing
- An irregular heart beat
- Cold, clammy skin

- Itchiness
- Wanting to urinate but finding it hard to
- Passing out
- Death

In an emergency

Call triple zero (000) if someone looks like they've had heroin and are in trouble. Ambulance officers don't have to involve the police and can use the drug naloxone to reverse the effects of heroin. While you wait for help to arrive:

- Stay with the person and keep crowds back
- Make sure they have enough air and loosen tight clothing
- If they lie down, put them on their side in case they vomit

Coming down

In the following days after using heroin, you may experience:

- Irritability
- Depression

Long term effects

If you regularly use heroin, it may eventually cause:

- Intense sadness
- Irregular periods and difficulty having children (females)
- No sex drive (males)
- Constipation
- A damaged heart, lungs, liver and brain
- Vein damage and skin, heart and lung infections from injecting
- Needing to use more to get the same effect
- Relying on heroin to feel good
- No money for food and bills
- Letting down your family and community

Mixing heroin with other drugs

The effects of taking heroin with other drugs – including over-the-counter or prescribed medications – can be unpredictable and dangerous.

Heroin + Ice, Speed or Ecstasy = enormous strain on the heart and body, which can lead to stroke.

Heroin + Alcohol, Yandri or Benzos = enormous strain on the body, and more likely to overdose.

Giving up heroin

If you want to give up heroin, but have been using it for a long time, your body has to get used to functioning without it. This is why you may experience withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms usually start within six to 24 hours after the last dose and can last for about a week – days one to three will be the worst.

Symptoms include:

- Cravings for heroin
- Restlessness and irritability
- Depression and crying
- Diarrhoea
- Restless sleep and yawning
- Stomach and leg cramps
- Vomiting and no appetite
- Goose bumps
- Runny nose
- A fast heart beat

It's important to ask for medical help to get you through withdrawal safely.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

Having a baby is a time of great change. If you are thinking about having a baby, pregnant or breastfeeding, it's important to consider the types of drugs you might be taking and how they could affect your baby. This is important because alcohol and other drugs you take will reach your baby while you are pregnant and breastfeeding.