

**The use of Opiates has increased throughout the country. Know the signs and systems of opiate use.**

The use of opiates has increased across the United States. One of the reasons for this increase is many people are becoming addicted to prescription opioid painkillers. Once addicted to pain killers, addicts will switch to Heroin, which is a much cheaper substitute to the painkillers and has the same effect.

Heroin is an opioid drug that is synthesized from morphine, a naturally occurring substance extracted from the seed pod of the Asian opium poppy plant. Heroin can be injected, inhaled by snorting or sniffing, or smoked. All three ways of ingestion deliver the drug to the brain very rapidly, which contributes to health risks and high risk for addiction.

Heroin abuse is associated with a number of serious health conditions, including fatal overdose, spontaneous abortion, and infectious diseases like hepatitis and HIV. Chronic users may develop collapsed veins, infection of the heart lining and valves, abscesses, constipation and gastrointestinal cramping, and liver or kidney disease. Pulmonary complications, including various types of pneumonia, may result from the poor health of the user as well as from heroin's effects on breathing.

**Click the following link for statistics regarding the increase in opiate use:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/heroin/>

**Signs and symptoms of heroin addiction will vary among users. The most common symptoms of heroin addiction include the following:**

- Delusions
- Disorientation
- Hallucinations
- Paranoia
- Lying about drug use
- Avoiding loved ones
- Decreased attention to personal hygiene
- Possession of burned spoons, needles or syringes, glass pipes
- Periods of hyperactivity followed by periods of exhaustion
- Inability to fulfill responsibilities at work or school
- Increased sleeping
- Apathy and lack of motivation
- Decline in occupational or academic performance

- Slurred, garbled speech
- Wearing long pants and shirts, even in warm weather (to cover needle marks)
- Going “on the nod” during conversations
- Forced, pressured speech
- Needle marks on arms and legs
- Constantly running nose
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea and vomiting
- Frequent respiratory infections
- Dry mouth
- Warm, flushed skin
- Constricted pupils
- Heaviness in arms and legs
- Extreme itching
- Weight loss
- Scabs or bruises as the result of picking at the skin

If you suspect someone is abusing heroin or opiates, get them help right away.

**The following links are for drug treatment centers in the Torrance area:**

<http://www.drug-rehabs.org/California-Torrance-drug-rehab-treatment.htm>

Thelma McMillen Center at Torrance Memorial Hospital

[http://www.torrancememorial.org/Alcohol\\_and\\_Drug\\_Treatment.aspx](http://www.torrancememorial.org/Alcohol_and_Drug_Treatment.aspx)

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence South Bay Area

<http://www.ncaddsb.com/>

**Sources:**

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/07/08/cdc-heroin-report\\_n\\_7755872.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/07/08/cdc-heroin-report_n_7755872.html)

<http://www.deltamedcenter.com/addiction/heroin/effects-symptoms-signs>

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/heroin>