By The Professionals At Evolve Indy

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3. What Happens To Your Body When You Use Heroin

The use of heroin has increased over the last ten years. This has led to not only an increase in heroin addiction but also heroin-related deaths. Understanding what leads to these addictions and what happens to your body when you use heroin can help those struggling and the people that love them find help and support on a road to recovery.

Details On Heroin

Heroin is in a group of drugs called opioids. There are prescription pain relievers that fall into this same category as codeine, oxycodone, and hydrocodone. You may know them by different names like OxyContin and Vicodin. The increase in heroin use may be related to people misusing and becoming addicted to these prescription pain relievers. Once addicted to these pain killers, users will sometimes switch to heroin because it is less expensive and easier to find.

Heroin is very addictive made from morphine. Morphine is a psychoactive substance that is made using the resin of the seed pod of an opium poppy plant. The way heroin is made will affect how it appears. It may be white or brown and in powder form. It may also be black and sticky. This is often referred to as black tar heroin.

Most people who start using heroin started with an addiction to pain pills, but not all heroin users fall into that category. Some heroin users started with heroin and not another drug first. They were usually under the impression that one use would not lead to addiction, but because of the addictive nature of heroin, that is not the case.

There are many different ways to use heroin. Some people mix it with water and then inject it into their bloodstream with a needle. Others prefer to sniff, snort, or smoke it. It can also be combined with other drugs like cocaine or alcohol which can raise the risk of overdose.

Short-Term Heroin Effects

Heroin reacts with the opioid receptors located in the brain, brain stem, and spinal cord. It also affects the lungs and intestines. Because of the sensitive nature of these areas, there is a wide range of physical problems that occur with heroin use. Basic life functions can be disrupted like breathing.

The person may experience dry mouth and warm flushing skin. They may also feel a heavy feeling in their arms and legs. They could have clouded thinking, severe itching, and nausea that can lead to vomiting. They may have a temporary feeling of happiness, but also may switch back and forth between being conscious and only semi-conscious.

Because needles are used, there are some other things that can happen as well. Shared needles and poor judgment while under the influence can lead to risky behavior, HIV, and hepatitis. If heroin is mixed with alcohol, the person may fall into a deep state of unconsciousness similar to a coma. Their breathing can slow to dangerous levels that may lead to overdose and death.

Long-Term Heroin Effects

In addition to the short-term effects when using heroin, extended use will also have long-term effects. Because of the addictive nature of heroin, using it for an extended period of time is likely without intervention and treatment.

Long-term heroin users will likely have trouble sleeping. If it is sniffed or snorted, then there will be damage to the tissues inside the nose. There may also be an area of tissue that develops a painful abscess filled with pus.

Long-term users will also be at risk to develop a heart infection, liver and kidney disease, and lung problems. They will also likely experience constipation and cramping in their stomach. Men might experience sexual problems, and women might notice a change in their menstrual cycles. Both will likely experience mental health issues, like depression and anxiety.

While these health concerns are troubling, heroin may also be mixed with other substances when bought on the street. Heroin laced with fentanyl is common. Fentanyl is cheap and helps drug dealers save money. Some substances mixed in with heroin are toxic and clog blood vessels. Clogs can travel to the lungs, liver, kidney, or brain and cause permanent damage to those vital organs.

The Next Step

If you are someone you care about struggles with heroin addiction, there is hope. Seeking professional help and treatment is essential, and the sooner it is obtained, the better it will be. Seeking treatment early can help stop some of these problems before they start, but it is helpful to seek treatment at any time. Different treatment and program options can help the person reclaim their life.

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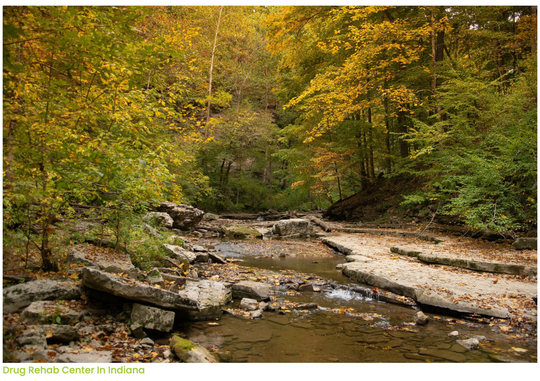

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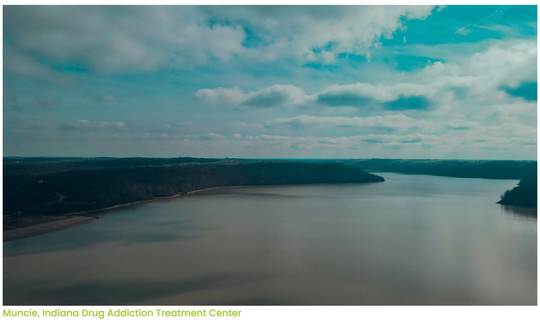

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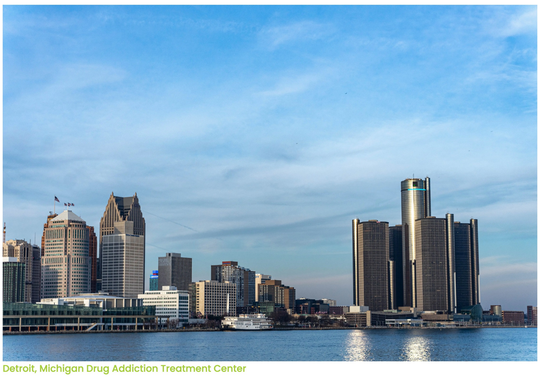

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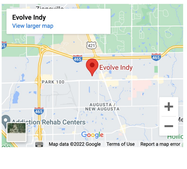
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