How Addictive Is Heroin: Impacts To Your Brain & Body

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One of the most well-known facts about heroin is that it is incredibly addictive. Of course, this is why so many people struggle to manage their heroin use, and ultimately end up needing some kind of therapy or addiction recovery care. But how addictive is it, really, and why is this the case? The more we understand about heroin addiction, the more empowered we become to overcome it more fully.

In this article, we are therefore going to take a deep look into heroin addiction: just how addictive is heroin, and what kind of an impact does it have in this way on the brain and the body?

Is Heroin Addictive?

First of all, let's answer the basic questions, just in case it needs clearing up for some. Is heroin addictive? Yes. Heroin is very addictive, one of the most addictive substances on the planet that we know about. People can become addicted to heroin after only a few uses, and that addiction can be strong, debilitating, and deadly. The withdrawal itself can kill. There is no doubt that heroin is an incredibly addictive substance.

Why Is Heroin Addictive?

So why is heroin generally so addictive? To understand this, you need to understand a little about how it is that heroin affects the brain. When a person uses heroin, the drug enters the bloodstream, passes the blood/brain barrier, and then attaches itself to molecules known as opioid receptors. These receptors can be found in various parts of the body, but it is those in the brain which matter in terms of addiction.

Attaching to these receptors causes the intense high that heroin is known for. After repeated use, those receptors start to respond differently to the heroin. In response to there being so much heroin being put into the system all the time, the opioid receptors respond less and less. That means that the user needs more of the drug in order to feel the same high. Then, because the user is taking more and more heroin, those reward circuits in the brain are just being overloaded again and again.

This overloading does two major things: it causes craving, by creating strong memories of intense pleasure which the individual then wants to seek out again and again in the future; and it makes it harder to find pleasure in other everyday activities which are not related to the drug in question.

As a result, the individual becomes increasingly addicted to the substance. As part of this process, the heroin begins to disrupt parts of the brain to do with self-control and judgement, making it even more difficult for the person to refuse to continue taking the drug. Essentially, the brain becomes tricked into thinking that the drug causes positive experiences – even if that is no longer the case for the individual who may, after all, rarely even get a high or a rush from the drug anymore anyway.

The Role Of Injecting & Smoking In Addiction

Because most people inject or smoke heroin, this actually makes a difference to how addictive the drug itself is in the body and brain. When you swallow a pill, the science shows that you are much less likely to become addicted compared to when you inject or smoke something. Why? Because these methods allow the drug to enter the bloodstream and the brain much faster than many other methods, and that makes the intense high much more intense, which therefore overloads the reward circuitry even more.

Easy Access To Heroin Equals More Addiction

Another important factor in addiction is how easy it is to get hold of the drug in question. If a user is living a lifestyle where it is very easy to get hold of, and where perhaps the heroin itself is quite cheap, then they are much more likely to develop an addiction in the first place, and more likely for the addiction to continue too. This is one reason why being an inpatient can be really helpful in trying to beat a heroin addiction.

With The Right Help, Recovery Is Possible

In all of this, it can be easy to get overwhelmed, and to feel as though it's not possible to overcome your addiction. But it is always possible, and many people do recover from even severe addictions every year. All you need is the right help.

If you feel you might be in need of that kind of help, you might want to get in touch today to find out more about our therapy services.

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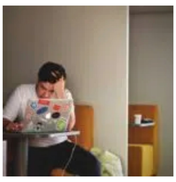

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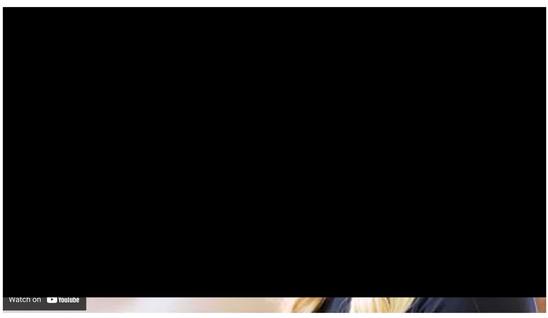
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