

Partnership for a Drug-Free America

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www.drugfreeamerica.org

- Your State Commission on Alcohol & Drug Abuse
- Your local Drug and Alcohol Council
- Your School District's Drug Prevention Education Program

For more information about
Heroin Kids: Dying for Help
and other educational videos
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Heroin Kids: Dying for Help was made
possible by the generous support of
The Hillcrest Foundation,
founded by Mrs. W. W. Caruth, Sr., and
The Harold Simmons Foundation.

HEROIN KIDS:

Dying for Help

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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SYNOPSIS

Heroin Kids; Dying for Help is a 21-minute video that illustrates the painful, often deadly, effects of using heroin. Young recovering heroin addicts share their stories about their usage, withdrawal and recovery. A mother talks about her nineteen year old son who died of a heroin overdose. A brother and sister discuss their sister's overdose and how they might have been able to prevent it. Dr. Larry Alexander, the nationally-recognized Emergency Room physician, talks to a group of middle school students about the physical consequences of heroin use. Together, these stories introduce students to the dangers of using heroin and encourage them to resist experimenting with the drug.

OBJECTIVES

After viewing the video students and/or parents will be able to:

- Describe the dangerous, often deadly nature of heroin use.
- Identify the many forms heroin may come in and its different names.
- State that, without question, heroin is always addictive and deadly.
- Witness the pain experienced by the family members of heroin users.
- Recognize the importance of seeking help for themselves, friends or family members if they are involved with heroin or any other drug.

WHAT IS HEROIN?

Heroin is an illegal, highly addictive drug. It is both the most abused and the most rapidly acting of the opiates. Heroin is processed from morphine, a naturally occurring substance extracted from the seed pod of certain varieties of poppy plants. It is typically sold as a white or brownish powder or as the black sticky substance known on the streets as *black tar heroin*. Heroin also is called many other names, including *chiva*, *H*, *Vitamin H*, *horse*, *smack*, *nanoo*, *China White*, and *Columbian White*.

Although purer heroin is becoming more common, most street heroin is "cut" with other drugs or with substances such as sugar, starch, powdered milk, or quinine. Street heroin can also be cut with strychnine or other poisons. Because heroin abusers do not know the actual strength of the drug or its true contents, they are at risk of overdose or death. Heroin also poses special problems because of the transmission of HIV and other diseases that can occur from sharing needles or other injection equipment. Heroin does not have to be injected with a needle -- it can also be snorted or smoked. Regardless of its form, heroin always poses the risk of overdose, addiction or death.

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

- A "rush" -- the short-lived euphoric feeling that hits the user very quickly after using heroin
- Depressed respiration
- Clouded mental functioning
- Nausea and vomiting
- Suppression of pain

LONG TERM EFFECTS

- Addiction
- Infectious diseases, for example, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis B and C
- Collapsed veins
- Bacterial infections
- Abscesses
- Infection of heart lining and valves
- Arthritis and other rheumatologic problems

TERMS/VOCABULARY

Addiction: A chronic, relapsing disease, characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use

Gateway Drugs: Usually tobacco, alcohol and marijuana. Most heroin users will experiment with these drugs before trying heroin.

Overdose: A situation in which a drug user takes too much of a particular drug. A heroin overdose can result in oxygen deprivation to the brain, which can cause permanent disabilities, coma and death.

Physical dependence: An adaptive physiological state that occurs with regular drug use and results in a withdrawal syndrome when drug use is stopped; usually occurs with tolerance.

Rush: A surge of euphoric pleasure that rapidly follows administration of a drug.

Tolerance: A condition in which higher doses of a drug are required to produce the same effect as during initial use; often leads to physical dependence.

Withdrawal: A variety of symptoms that occur after use of an addictive drug is reduced or stopped. Withdrawal from heroin can include nausea, diarrhea, body aches, cold chills and severe itching.

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES BEFORE THE FILM

1. Research your local newspaper for articles about how heroin has affected your community.
2. How is heroin depicted in the media? Name famous rock stars who have used and died from heroin.
3. Heroin originates from opium poppies, which are illegal to grow in the United States. Find out more about these poppies and where they come from.
4. What is your impression of a heroin user?
5. Do you know anyone who has been directly affected by heroin? How was this person affected?
6. Heroin originates from opium poppies, which are illegal to grow in the United States. Find out more about these poppies and where they come from.
7. What is your impression of a heroin user?
8. Do you know anyone who has been directly affected by heroin? How was this person affected?

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES AFTER THE FILM

1. How has your impression of a heroin user changed?
2. What did you learn about heroin?
3. Why do you think people use heroin?
4. Do you think it's OK to experiment with heroin?
5. What about other drugs?

7. Put yourself in the brother's position. If you knew a family member or a friend was using heroin, what would you do? Who could you talk to about getting them help?

8. What can you say to someone who offers you heroin?

9. What kinds of activities can you participate in instead of using drugs?

10. Divide the class into small groups, and have them write down specific ways they can avoid using drugs.

11. Have the students act out a scenario in which one student offers heroin to a group of students. Reverse the roles so that all students have the chance to say no to the "dealer."

OTHER ISSUES TO DISCUSS

- Heroin is illegal in the United States. Why?
- Recovering heroin addicts face a lifelong struggle to keep off heroin. As one young man in the video pointed out, "The mental addiction never goes away." While it is possible to stay clean after using heroin, the addict will require professional counseling and a strong support system.
- Addiction is called a "family disease." Why?

READ AND LEARN MORE ABOUT HEROIN

Condon, Judith. *The Pressure to Take Drugs*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1990.

Kaplan, Leslie. *Coping with Peer Pressure*. New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 1994.

Littell, Mary Ann. *Heroin Drug Dangers*. Springfield, N.J.: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1999.

Smith, Sandra Lee. *Heroin*. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 1995.

Woods, Geraldine. *Heroin*. Springfield, N.J.: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1994.

RESOURCES

American Council for Drug Education

204 Monroe Street, Suite 110
Rockville, MD 20850
1-800-488-DRUG

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

5600 Fishers Lane, 9th Floor
Rockville, MD 20857
(310) 443-0365

Daytop

54 West 40th Street
New York, NY 10018
212-354-6000

Narcotics Anonymous

19737 Nordhoff Place
Chatsworth, CA 91311
818-773-9999
www.na.org

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

P.O. Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20847
1-800-729-6686
www.health.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse

6001 Executive Blvd
Bethesda, Maryland
20892-9561
301-443-1124
www.nida.org

Parent's Resource Institute for Drug Education Inc. (PRIDE)

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