What is heroin?

Heroin is an opiate that produces a “downer” effect that quickly induces a state of relaxation and euphoria. Like other opiates, it blocks the brain’s ability to perceive pain. Heroin is produced from morphine, a naturally occurring substance that comes from the seedpod of poppy plants. Heroin is also known as smack, horse, brown sugar, dope, H, junk, skag, skunk, white horse, China white, and Mexican black tar.

What is fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid analgesic that is similar to morphine but is 50 to 100 times more potent. It is typically used to treat patients with severe pain or to manage pain after surgery. Street names for fentanyl or for fentanyl-laced heroin include Apache, China Girl, China White, Dance Fever, Friend, Cash, Goodfella, Jackpot, Murder 8, TNT, and Tango.

Who is using?

The image of a heroin addict lying in a filthy, dark alley is obsolete. Today, the addict could be a teen who plays video games, appears smart, trendy and shows none of the common traces of heroin use, such as needle marks on his or her arm. The addict could also be a middle-aged man with a job and family who can function next to normal and keep his use hidden, or even a young woman in her 20’s.

These images have changed because heroin is available in various forms that are easier to consume, more affordable and easier to obtain. A person who might think twice about putting a needle in his or her arm may more readily smoke or sniff the same drug. But this is falsely reassuring and may give the idea that there is less risk.

The truth is that heroin in all its forms is dangerous and addictive. Addiction to heroin often begins with dependence on prescription painkillers, but can also be part of a progression of dependence on other substances, leading to heroin use. Anyone can become addicted. This epidemic is not somewhere else. It’s here. It’s affecting our cities and our suburbs.

LAKE/GEAUGA COUNTY RESOURCES

If you are even thinking about trying heroin, or using, or know of someone who is, consider reaching out to the following resources for information and assistance, or for more information about the heroin epidemic:

LAKE COUNTY

- If you’re in a medical crisis, call 911, or go to the nearest hospital emergency department
- Catholic Charities Corporation substance abuse treatment program: 440-352-6191; 8 North State Street, Suite 455, Painesville; www.cccfolce.org/ccccslake.htm
- Lake County Crisis Hotline: 440-953-TALK (953-8255)
- ADAMHS Board of Lake County: 440-918-2000 or 440-350-200; www.helpthatworks.us
- Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers, Inc.: 440-255-0678; 9083 Mentor Ave., Mentor OH 44060; www.lgrc.us
- Call 211 for agencies and other resources http://www.lclifeline.org/

GEAUGA COUNTY

- Catholic Charities Corporation substance abuse treatment program: 440-285-3537
- Geauga County Board of Mental Health & Recovery Services: www.geauga.org/substance-abuse-services
- Geauga County COPELINE: 1-888-285-5665 or 440-285-5665; www.geauga.org
- Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers, Inc.: 440-255-0678; 9083 Mentor Ave., Mentor OH 44060; www.lgrc.us
- Ravenwood Health: 440-285-3568

Important Links to More Information

- GreaterThanHeroin.com
- Project DAWN: 440-350-2417
- Call 211 or www.211OH.org
- StartTalking.Ohio.gov
- 12 Step Programs: HeroinAnonymous.org, NA.org, or AA.org, Al-Anon.org
- Lakeopiagetaskforce.org
How would I know if someone is using heroin or fentanyl?

Drowsiness. A once cheerful person can turn sad and may seem tired when under the influence of heroin/fentanyl/ opioids. Other signs may include nausea, loss of appetite, headaches and dry mouth.

Changes in friends. Users will begin to hang around with other users. Even best friends will be left behind for heroin/fentanyl/opioids.

Drug evidence and paraphernalia. Heroin can be smoked, snorted or injected. Depending on the method, you may find traces of the drug or paraphernalia of drug use. Heroin may be a powdery or crumbly substance, ranging from off-white to dark brown. Black tar heroin is nearly black and is sticky instead of powdery. You might find syringes, small glass or metal pipes, dirty spoons, lighters, scales, coffee grinders, small plastic bags and belts or rubber tubing. Fentanyl can be sold as a patch—a small piece of film that can be dissolved under the tongue, and a pill meant to be lodged inside the cheek. In hospital settings, fentanyl can be injected. For the individual abusing the drug outside a hospital, this is highly dangerous, as the difference between a therapeutic dose and a deadly dose is very small. Fentanyl is being sold in a form that is a “look-alike” to oxycodone. If these items are found, there is usually little question about the purpose.

Money problems. Drugs cost money. People addicted will ask friends and family for loans, or may turn to stealing money or items to sell.

Missing possessions. You may notice that a person’s possessions are missing, such as TVs, stereos, DVD players, computers, etc. They are missing because selling personal items is a common way to raise money for addictions.

Track marks. People who shoot heroin into their blood stream will begin to have needle marks on various parts of their body. These “tracks” will become harder and harder to hide.

Dependence on prescription painkillers. Many people who are addicted to Heroin or Fentanyl started out by taking prescription painkillers.

What can I do?

Individuals abusing opioids/heroin/fentanyl need professional help. Treatment does work, and there are detoxification and treatment programs available. To find a listing of resources in this county, see the back side of this brochure. You can talk to your primary physician, or, if in crisis, go to the hospital emergency room for help. The first step in seeking help typically involves getting a good clinical assessment from a behavioral health provider, experienced in substance use disorders. The assessment provider will establish your involvement with substance use, and recommend services for recovery. Detoxification programs address physical withdrawal symptoms, which will occur for someone in active addiction. However, detoxification does not substitute for a comprehensive residential or outpatient treatment program. In specific circumstances, medication assisted treatment (MAT) is recommended along with substance use disorder treatment services. Sticking to treatment is the most important thing. Heroin addiction is life threatening. Users can get very sick, very fast, and are less likely to accept medical or behavioral health treatment, because getting high becomes their priority.

What else should I know?

Addiction to heroin and fentanyl often begins with dependence on prescription painkillers. If you or a loved one are prescribed an opiate painkiller, keep it away from other members of your household or visitors. If you do not use the entire prescription, dispose of the medicine properly by using the Prescription Drug Drop-Off Program in your area. Visit www.rxdrugdropbox.org to find a location near you. They are located in most police departments and sheriff’s offices.

Although it may be difficult, you may have to involve the police if you know your loved one has been stealing from you or others, due to addiction to heroin or fentanyl. Your loved one may enter the criminal justice system and, depending on the judge, may participate in Drug Court. Family members should also seek help and join a support group, e.g. Al-Anon.

Learn about Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided with Naloxone)

Project DAWN is a community based overdose education and Naloxone (Narcan) distribution program. Naloxone (also known as Narcan) is a medication that can reverse an overdose caused by an opioid drug (heroin or prescription pain medications). When administered during an overdose, naloxone blocks the effects of opioids on the brain and quickly restores breathing. Naloxone has been used safely by emergency medical professionals for more than 40 years and has only this one critical function: to reverse the effects of opioids in order to prevent overdose death. Naloxone has no potential for abuse.

Free Naloxone Kits are available to a person addicted to heroin and/or friends and family on an appointment basis at the Lake County General Health District, 5966 Heisley Road, Mentor, OH 44060, 440-350-2417.

Ohio law contains a “Good Samaritan” clause that blankets prosecution of someone who gives naloxone to an overdosing person and then calls 9-1-1, even if the caller was using drugs, to eliminate the fear of calling for help. First responders including police, firefighters and paramedics usually carry naloxone.

Community members can access naloxone at their local Discount Drug Mart or Walgreens, no prescription needed. It is not free, but is covered by most insurance plans. If a patient does not have insurance, the cost will be out of pocket (for pricing, contact your local pharmacy).

A PRAYER TO MATT TALBOT

May Matt Talbot’s triumph over addiction, bring hope to our lives and strength to our hearts. May he intercede for all who struggle with an addiction. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Christ, our Great Healer.

Amen.