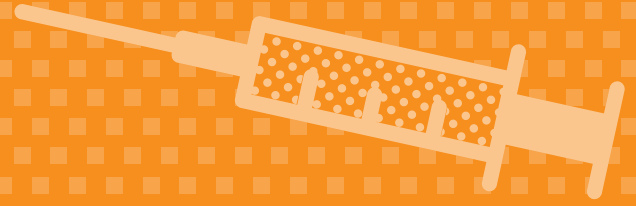




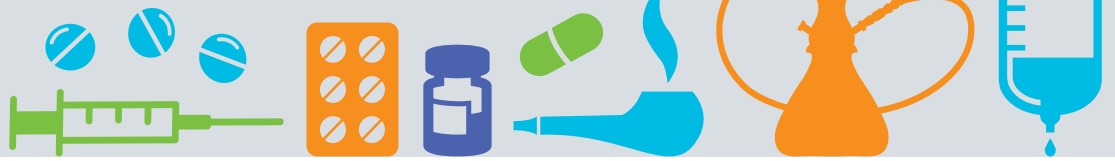
# Opiates



**Opiates AKA heroin, codeine, methadone, morphine, pethidine, smack, harry, horse**

## What are they?

Opiates are depressants — they slow down your central nervous system. They come in many forms, both illegal and prescribed. Opiates include drugs like heroin, codeine, methadone, morphine, pethidine and OxyContin. Opiates can be smoked, injected, swallowed or snorted depending on the kind that you use.



The only “safe way” to use opiates is under close medical supervision, however, if you are choosing to use recreationally, it is important that you use as safely as possible.



## What do they do?

How you react to opiates depends on the type of opiate you are using, how much you’ve taken, whether you are using it on its own or if you are mixing it with something else, your size and the kind of mood you are in.



The effects of opiates are usually felt quickly; straight away if you inject or smoke it, or up to 10-15 minutes if you snort or swallow it. Depending on what type of opiates you are using these effects can usually last three to five hours.



Opiates make you feel relaxed, sleepy and euphoric and can be used for pain relief. You might also feel itchy. The first dose can make you dizzy and vomit.

Using a lot of opiates can slow your breathing and heart rate down to the point where you are at risk of overdose.

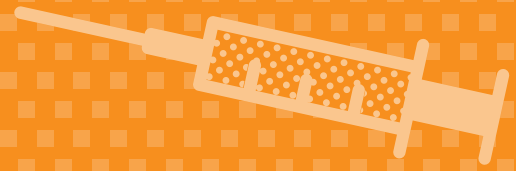
In the days after using you may also feel irritable or depressed.

## Opiates and your mental health

One of the things that people like about taking opiates is that they can make you feel really warm and happy; like you are floating. For this reason some people might take opiates to help with feelings of depression or anxiety but long term use can make anxiety or depression much worse.



# Opiates



## What happens if I stop using?



If you become dependent on opiates, withdrawal can be uncomfortable and can last one to two weeks.

Some common withdrawal symptoms are:

- Restlessness
- Muscle and bone pain
- Insomnia
- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting
- Cold flashes with goose bumps (“cold turkey”)
- Involuntary leg movements.

## When someone overdoses

Taking too many opiates can cause someone to overdose. The risk of overdose is increased if someone also uses depressant type drugs, such as alcohol or Xanax, at the same time. This may lead to things like collapsing, vomiting, slowed and shallow breathing, loss of consciousness or becoming unresponsive. It will look different depending on what’s happening for the person (e.g. they may have mixed with other drugs).

If you are worried about someone overdosing, you can:



**Call 000** – you won’t get into trouble for asking for help



**Stay with your friend;** don’t leave them alone



**Put your friend on their side if they are unconscious** or in case they vomit



**Keep an eye on their breathing.**

## Staying safe

There is always a risk that something bad will happen if you use opiates recreationally. You can reduce some of this risk by:



**Going low, going slow.** Just use a bit at a time and wait to see what it feels like before taking more.



**Not mixing with other drugs or alcohol** – it can get out of control quickly.



**Only using with people you trust.** It’s good if someone in your group isn’t using to keep an eye on you. Keep an eye on your mates too.



**Never sharing needles.**



**Using clean equipment** to avoid the risk of contracting blood borne viruses like HIV or Hepatitis C.



**Making sure that you eat,** even if you don’t feel like it.



**Taking a break.** Make sure that you have opiate free days and try not to use them before anything big (e.g. exams).



**Calling an ambulance (000)** if things get bad.



## Getting help



If your opiates use is starting to affect things that matter, like your mental health, wellbeing or your friendships, it can be a good idea to talk to someone about your options, such as different ways to reduce or stop your use. Whatever you decide, **headspace** can help.



**headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)