



THE CONNECTION

IOWA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL POLICY

ISSUE 6, FEBRUARY 11, 2014—HEROIN

WELCOME FROM DIRECTOR LUKAN

Thanks for taking a few minutes to read our new newsletter, *The Connection*. I hope you find the information useful and pass it along to others who may have interest.

The first step to winning any battle is knowing your enemy. We hope to share basic knowledge about the appearance and effects of drugs that may be affecting your community and your family, so that you will know it when you see it and learn how to fight it.

While Iowa remains a leader in low rates of drug usage, challenges are constantly on the horizon.

One of the more pressing problems facing the nation,

and thus Iowa is a resurgence of heroin, often tied to prescription drug abuse.

Why should Iowans care about this? Anecdotally, many reports from law enforcement tie drug trafficking activity in the Chicago area to the suburbs of Iowa. Drug traffickers target areas like Iowa suburbs because they know young people there often have access to cash, and believe few parents are on the look out for their activity.

Research suggests when young people experiment with prescription drugs, there is a high chance they will turn to heroin later.

What can you do? Take time to talk with your kids about the dangers of drug abuse, and encourage them to live drug free and healthy lives.

Believe it or not, a few words of encouragement from parents and other loved ones can make a huge difference in the ability of a young person to say no when offered drugs.

Sincerely,

Steven F. Lukan

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Welcome from Director Lukan*
- *Heroin Use*
- *Heroin and Prescription Opioids*
- *Heroin Use Statistics*

HELPFUL LINKS:

- *Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center*
www.drugfreeinfo.org
- *Iowa Medicine TLC*
www.iowamedicinetlc.org
- *Office of Drug Control Policy*
www.iowa.gov/odcp
- *Partnership @ Drug Free Iowa.org*
www.drugfreeiowa.org
- *Iowa Poison Control Center*
www.iowapoisson.org

HEROIN USE

Heroin is an opioid drug that is synthesized from morphine, a naturally occurring drug extracted from the seed pod of the Asian opium poppy plant.

Heroin is an illegal, highly addictive drug. It is both the most abused and most rapidly acting of the opiates.

Heroin usually appears as a white or tan powder, or sometimes as a sticky black substance, known as "black tar heroin."

Heroin can be injected, snorted, or smoked. All three methods deliver the drug to the brain very quickly.

Once it enters the brain, heroin is converted back into morphine, which binds to molecules on cells known as opioid receptors. These receptors are found in many areas of the brain and body, and the brain stem. Heroin overdoses frequently involve a suppression of breathing, which can be fatal.

Heroin use can result in tolerance, in which more of the drug is needed to achieve the same high.

In addition, most street heroin is "cut" with other substances. Because heroin abusers do not know the actual strength of the drug or its true contents, they are at risk of overdose or death.

Another risk of heroin use is dependence. If a user stops or reduces use of the drug

abruptly, he or she may go through severe withdrawal.

Heroin users are also at high risk for a number of serious health conditions including: HIV, hepatitis C, spontaneous abortion, collapsed veins, infection of the heart lining, fatal overdose, abscesses, and liver or kidney disease.

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse

HEROIN AND PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS

Prescription opioid pain medications, such as oxycodone and hydrocodone, are in the same family of drugs as heroin. They can have effects similar to heroin when taken in doses or in ways other than prescribed. These drugs are currently among the most abused drugs in the United States. Research now suggests that abuse of these pain medications may open the door to heroin use.

In three recent studies, nearly half of young people who inject heroin reported abusing prescription opioids before starting to use heroin. Some also reported starting to use heroin because it is cheaper and easier to get than prescription drugs.

Many people in these studies also reported crushing their prescription opioid pills to snort or inject. This often proved to be their initiation into these methods of administering drugs.

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse



HEROIN USE STATISTICS

- Iowa substance abuse treatment admissions for heroin, while still relatively low, reached a 20-year high of more than 600 in 2013, or 1.2% of total treatment admissions. *Iowa Department of Public Health*
- Iowa heroin overdose deaths rose 700% from 2002 to 2012. *Iowa Department of Public Health*
- The amount of heroin seized at the Southwest border rose 232% from 2008 to 2012. *U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration*
- Americans who said they used heroin in the past year jumped almost 80% from 2007 to 2012. *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*
- 3,094 people died from heroin overdoses in 2010, up 55% from 2000. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*
- Heroin in the 1980's may have been 5% pure, but today it is not uncommon to find heroin that is 50% pure. *U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration*
- 80 % of people trying heroin for the first time were previously abusing prescription pain medications. *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*
- Heroin is often combined with other dangerous drugs, including the synthetic opiate fentanyl. That combination has contributed to 59 recent deaths along the east coast. *Washington-Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area*



IOWA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL POLICY

Pape State Office Building
215 East 7th, Fifth Floor
Des Moines, IA 50319

Phone: 515-725-0300
Fax: 515-725-0304
E-mail: susie.sher@iowa.gov

WWW.IOWA.GOV/ODCP

Disclaimer: The information contained in this newsletter is for general information purposes only. The information is provided by ODCP and while we do everything possible to ensure accuracy, we make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the completeness, accuracy, reliability, suitability, or availability with respect to the information contained for any purpose. Any reliance you place on such information is therefore strictly at your own risk.