

To reduce your chances of getting problems from injecting, you can:

- Try other ways of using heroin like smoking or snorting
- Learn how to inject as safely as possible. Get information and a pamphlet about safer injecting
- Always use a new needle and syringe each time you use
- Never share your injecting gear
- Always wash your hands before and after injecting

IS USING HEROIN A PROBLEM FOR YOU?

If you can't decide whether using heroin is a problem for you, ask yourself these questions:

- Is using heroin becoming the most important thing in my life?
- Am I getting sick because I am using?
- Is using causing arguments or trouble between me and my family?
- Am I spending more that I want to on drugs?
- Is using getting me into trouble with the law?

A 'yes' to any of these questions may mean it's time to get help to quit, cut down or take a break from using.

A 'yes' to any of these questions may also mean it is time to ask for help.

NEED SOME HELP?

If you are concerned about using heroin, you can get help from your local Aboriginal Health Worker, doctor or a drug and alcohol service.

Families and friends who are worried about someone who is using heroin can also get support and information from these places.



**ABORIGINAL
DRUG AND ALCOHOL
COUNCIL (SA) INC.**



**INDIGENOUS
SUBSTANCE MISUSE
HEALTH PROMOTION UNIT.**

This pamphlet has been produced at the Aboriginal Drug & Alcohol Council (SA) Inc. by the Indigenous Substance Misuse Health Promotion Unit as part of the Illicit Drug Resource Package.

All the information in the pamphlet is believed to be accurate at January 2004. As ADAC has no control over the way that this pamphlet will be used, or by whom, we disclaim any responsibility for the outcomes of training or interventions which rely on, or make use of this material.



HEROIN

Keeping Safe

KEEPING SAFE

THE BEST WAY TO KEEP SAFE IS NOT TO USE AT ALL

OVERDOSE

Overdose is one of the main problems that heroin users have to deal with.

WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

Overdose can happen because too much heroin has been used. How much is too much usually depends on the strength of the heroin, how it has been used, how often the person has used in the past and what other drugs they may also have used.

REDUCING THE RISK OF OVERDOSE

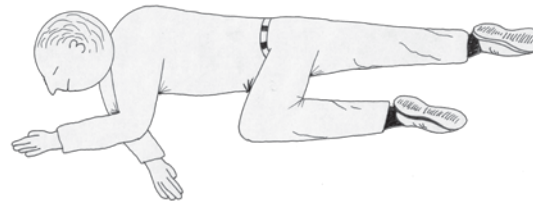
You can reduce the chances of overdose happening by:

- Trying a small amount of the heroin first. It might be much stronger than you think
- Never mixing heroin with other drugs like alcohol and pills
- Always making sure that someone else is around when you use. They can help if something goes wrong
- Knowing what to do if someone else overdoses

HOW CAN YOU TELL IF SOMEONE HAS OVERDOSED?

- The person may collapse, or drift slowly into unconsciousness
- Very slow, shallow breathing
- Pinpoint pupils
- Blue lips, fingernails, skin. This may not be a good sign to look for in darker skinned people
- No response to anything
- Fits
- Increased blood pressure
- Coma
- Snoring or gurgling as fluid builds in the lungs
- Looking as if they have drifted off to sleep

RECOVERY POSITION



WHAT TO DO

If a person looks as if they have overdosed DON'T leave them to get over it. Keep calm and:

- Put them in the recovery position (some people call this the coma position)
- Dial triple zero (000) and ask for an ambulance
- Do what the ambulance officers say
- Stay with the person, even after they have revived

Remember! It only takes a few minutes for someone who has stopped breathing to die.

Police will usually not be called unless the ambulance officers feel hassled or someone has died. Sometimes, however, they may choose to respond to an overdose.

INJECTING HEROIN

Injecting heroin can cause problems with:

- **Veins** - they can get very fragile and collapse or become scarred
- **Infections** - injecting breaks the skin so germs can move quickly from outside the body into the blood stream
- **Blood-borne viruses** - hepatitis B and C and HIV can all be passed on from one person to another if you are sharing needles, syringes and other injecting equipment like a tourniquet, spoon, mix and swabs.