

## OPIATES



Opiates, sometimes referred to as narcotics, are a group of drugs that are used medically to relieve pain, but also have a high potential for abuse. Opioids include both natural opiates (drugs from the opium poppy) and opiate-related synthetic drugs (such as meperidine and methadone). Opiates are found in the gummy substance extracted from the seed of the Asian poppy, *Papaver somniferum*. Opium is produced from this substance. Morphine and codeine are derivatives of opium. Heroin is produced from morphine or codeine. Other opiates, such as meperidine (Demerol), methadone, hydromorphone (Dilaudid), oxycodone (Percodan, Percocet) and hydrocodone, a semisynthetic narcotic analgesic and cough suppressant, similar to codeine, (Vicodin, Lortab, Lorcet) are synthesized or manufactured.

### *Slang Terms*

- Opium
  - ✓ Dream Stick
  - ✓ God's Medicine
  - ✓ Hard Stuff
  - ✓ Midnight Oil
  - ✓ Dover's Powder
- Heroin
  - ✓ Antifreeze
  - ✓ Junk
  - ✓ Smack
  - ✓ Horse
  - ✓ China White
- Codeine
  - ✓ School Boy
- Morphine
  - ✓ White Stuff
  - ✓ Cube
  - ✓ Mud

Hydrocodone is combined with acetaminophen (a non-narcotic analgesic and fever reducer, brand name Tylenol) to achieve pain relieve.

Acting mostly on the central nervous and digestive systems, narcotics are used for the relief of moderate to moderately severe pain such as back pain and migraine headaches, control diarrhea, and suppress coughing. Opium is rarely used medicinally, except for severe diarrhea. Morphine is widely used to relieve severe pain. Codeine is usually found in prescription cough medicines and pain relievers. Methadone is a synthetic used mainly in the treatment of heroin addiction. Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic used for severe pain and as a surgical anesthetic. Some of the prescription medicines that contain morphine, codeine or opium include Robitussin A-C, Roxanol, Actifed with Codeine Cough Syrup, Triaminic Expectorant with Codeine, and Tylenol with Codeine.

Opiates can produce a quick, intense feeling of pleasure followed by a sense of well-being and a calm drowsiness. When used properly for medical purposes, opiates do not produce intense feelings of pleasure, and patients have very little chance of becoming addicted.

In the 1970s scientists isolated substances called enkephalins, which are naturally occurring opiates in the brain. They discovered what many believe is the reason behind physical dependence on opiates - that is, the drugs may mimic the actions of enkephalins. If true, this hypothesis suggests that physical dependence on opiates may develop in people who

have a deficiency of these natural substances.

Opium appears either as dark brown chunks or as a powder and is usually smoked or eaten. Pure heroin is a white powder with a bitter taste. Street heroin may vary in color from white or brownish powder because of impurities or additives. Heroin is usually dissolved in water and injected. Most street preparations of heroin are diluted ("cut") with other substances such as sugar, Milk sugar, powdered milk, quinine or other drugs. Other opiate analgesics come in a variety of forms including capsules, tablets, syrups, elixirs, solutions and suppositories. Street users usually inject opiate solutions under the skin ("skin popping") or directly into a vein or muscle, but the drugs may also be "snorted" into the nose or taken orally or rectally.

### **Physiological and Physical Effects**

All opiates, including opium, are very physiologically and somewhat psychologically addictive. Tolerance is developed very rapidly, requiring more and more of the drug to reach the same "high".

Opiates produce different effects under different circumstances. The drug user's past experience and expectations have some influence, as does the method of administering the drug (by injection, ingestion, or inhalation).

Heroin is the most addictive substance in the Opiate family of drugs. It activates many regions of the brain particularly the regions that are responsible for producing both the

pleasurable sensation of "reward" and physical dependence. Together, these actions account for the user's loss of control and the drug's habit-forming action. Heroin produces a "rush" or "high" immediately after being taken. It also produces a state of profound indifference and may increase energy for a short while. There are no known medical purposes for heroin.

Addiction can cause respiratory depression, malnutrition, and low blood pressure, nausea, vomiting, coma and death.

### **Withdrawal and Treatment**

Opiate dependence occurs very rapidly, sometimes within weeks. Once a user becomes addicted, they will continue to use the drug not only for the purpose of intoxication, but to avoid the painful withdrawal symptoms that naturally come with opiate addiction. Symptoms of withdrawal from opiates include kicking movements in the legs, anxiety, insomnia, nausea, sweating, cramps, vomiting, diarrhea and fever. The onset of these symptoms can occur five hours after the last dose, lasting seven to ten days. Medical treatment is necessary for detoxifying the body of a user before counseling can take place. Withdrawal from use is extremely painful and dangerous. Because of this, medical intervention is necessary.

#### ***Withdrawal Symptoms***

- Insomnia
- Severe anxiety
- Profuse sweating
- Muscle spasms
- diarrhea