



Drug Fact Sheet

Opium

WHAT IS OPIUM?

Opium is a highly addictive non-synthetic narcotic that is extracted from the poppy plant, *Papaver somniferum*. The opium poppy is the key source for many narcotics, including morphine, codeine, and heroin.

WHAT IS ITS ORIGIN?

The poppy plant, *Papaver somniferum*, is the source of opium. It was grown in the Mediterranean region as early as 5000 B.C., and has since been cultivated in a number of countries throughout the world. The milky fluid that seeps from its incisions in the unripe seedpod of this poppy has been scraped by hand and air-dried to produce what is known as opium.

A more modern method of harvesting for pharmaceutical use is by the industrial poppy straw process of extracting alkaloids from the mature dried plant (concentrate of poppy straw). All opium and poppy straw used for pharmaceutical products are imported into the United States from legitimate sources in regulated countries.

What are common street names?

Common street names include:

- Ah-pen-yen, Aunti, Aunti Emma, Big O, Black Pill, Chandoo, Chandu, Chinese Molasses, Chinese Tobacco, Dopium, Dover's Powder, Dream Gun, Dream Stick, Dreams, Easing Powder, Fi-donnie, Gee, God's Medicine, Gondola, Goric, Great Tobacco, Guma, Hop/hops, Joy Plant, Midnight Oil, Mira, O, O.P., Ope, Pen Yan, Pin Gon, Pox, Skee, Toxy, Toys, When-shee, Ze, and Zero

What does it look like?

Opium can be a liquid, solid, or powder, but most poppy straw concentrate is available commercially as a fine brownish powder.

How is it used?

Opium can be smoked, intravenously injected, or taken in pill form. Opium is also misused in combination with other drugs. For example, "Black" is a combination of marijuana, opium, and methamphetamine, and "Buddha" is potent marijuana spiked with opium.

What is its effect on the mind?

The intensity of opium's euphoric effects on the brain depends on the dose and route of administration. It works quickly when smoked because the opiate chemicals pass into the lungs, where they are quickly absorbed and then sent to the brain. An opium "high" is very similar to a heroin "high"; users experience a euphoric rush, followed by relaxation and the relief of physical pain.

What is its effect on the body?

Opium inhibits muscle movement in the bowels leading to constipation. It also can dry out the mouth and mucous membranes in the nose. Opium use leads to physical and psychological dependence, and can lead to overdose.

What are its overdose effects?

Overdose effects include:

- Slow breathing, seizures, dizziness, weakness, loss of consciousness, coma, and possible death

Which drugs cause similar effects?

Drugs that cause similar effects include:

- Morphine, codeine, heroin, methadone, hydroquinone, fentanyl, and oxycodone

What is its legal status in the United States?

Opium is a Schedule II narcotic under the Controlled Substances Act. Most opioids are Schedule II, III, IV, or V drugs. Some drugs that are derived from opium, such as heroin, are Schedule I drugs.