

Local services that can help you:

Your local services here

Press return for extra lines.

More information on anthrax is available on the HPA website: <http://tinyurl.com/hpaanthraxadvice>

To get advice or to get help to treat drug addiction contact:

Your advice here

Press return for extra lines.

ANTHRAX IS KILLING HEROIN USERS



EARLY TREATMENT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

Anthrax is a bug that has got into batches of heroin in Scotland and England.

Anthrax is causing life-threatening infections.

You can get anthrax if you inject, smoke or inhale your heroin.

Typical signs of anthrax can include:

- lots of swelling and redness where you injected
- a fever and headache, or
- feeling ill and finding it hard to breathe.

If you think you have anthrax, immediately go to your nearest hospital emergency department and tell them.

What is anthrax?

Anthrax is a bug which doctors think got into some batches of heroin sold across Scotland. This is now happening in England.

Anthrax can kill if it is not treated quickly. A substantial number of people have already died from anthrax.

How can you get anthrax?

All anthrax infections in recent weeks have been among heroin users.

You can get anthrax by injecting and by smoking or inhaling heroin.

How can I tell if my heroin is contaminated with anthrax?

Unfortunately, there is no way of telling if the heroin you have is contaminated with the anthrax bug.

It may look the same and it may dissolve or burn the same, but it could still contain anthrax.

What are the symptoms?

If you inject heroin:

You may have lots of swelling and redness at the injecting site, leading to an abscess or ulcer.

You may have other symptoms such as fever and headache.

If you smoke or inhale heroin:

You may feel ill and find it hard to breathe.

You may have a fever or flu-like symptoms or a bad headache.

What should I do if I have these symptoms?

If you have any of the symptoms, you need to get medical help very quickly.

Go to a hospital emergency department immediately.

How to reduce the risks of getting anthrax

1. There is no safe way of taking heroin.
2. Stop using heroin; but if not, at least use less.
3. Go to your local drug treatment service to discuss support and use of heroin substitutes such as methadone or buprenorphine.
4. If you continue to use heroin, don't share needles, syringes, filters, cookers/ spoons or other 'works' with other drug users.
5. If you stop heroin and then re-start, be careful at first – so you don't overdose because of any lost tolerance.

Be aware of the early signs and symptoms:

If injecting heroin:

– redness and excessive swelling at the site of injection.

If heroin is smoked or inhaled:

– fever and flu-like symptoms and possible breathing difficulties.

Seek help at your nearest hospital emergency department

Immediate treatment with antibiotics can be life saving.

PLEASE TELL OTHERS ABOUT THIS INFECTION.

