

High schoolers on heroin abuse other drugs, too

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(HealthDay)—High school seniors hooked on heroin are likely to misuse

a multitude of other drugs, a new study finds.

"It may be inadequate to focus on [heroin](#) and opioid use in isolation," said study author Joseph Palamar, an associate professor of population health at New York University School of Medicine in New York City.

As the opioid epidemic continues unchecked in the United States, [heroin addiction](#) is increasing. A strong link between prescription [opioid](#) painkiller abuse and heroin use exists, and those who abuse prescription narcotics are prime candidates to use heroin, studies suggest.

But it turns out that heroin users often combine their poison with other drugs as well.

For example, benzodiazepines such as Xanax and Valium, prescribed to treat anxiety and often abused, are now used with heroin. In fact, these particular drugs are involved in 23 percent of heroin-related overdose deaths in the United States. And 59 percent of heroin overdose deaths involved at least one other drug, the researchers said.

For the study, Palamar and his colleagues collected data on 327 high school seniors who reported using heroin in the past month.

They found that seniors who used heroin also commonly used an average of five drugs. These included other opioids and benzodiazepines. Using a combination of drugs was 10 to 39 times greater among those who used heroin, the researchers found.

Among those who used heroin the most, however, the use of other drugs dropped, which may be due to the high costs of frequent heroin use, the researchers speculated.

Although alcohol was often used with heroin, drinking was associated

with lower odds of frequent heroin use, the researchers said.

"Considering users' overall [drug](#) use profiles appears to be important, because the concurrent use of multiple drugs can exacerbate adverse health effects associated with heroin use, such as overdose," Palamar said in a university news release. "A deeper understanding of how [heroin users](#) also currently use other drugs can help us to discern better prevention measures."

More information: Visit the [U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) for more on heroin use.

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