Law enforcement's push over the past year against illegal use of prescription medications may be turning more drug users to heroin.

"An alarming trend among drug users has emerged over the last year," advised Sgt. Jerry Goodin, who serves as public information officer for the Indiana State Police Sellersburg post.

According to Sgt. Goodin, heroin has been showing up on Indiana streets in a frequency that has made it the "most abused" narcotic, surpassing even cocaine.

In 2011, heroin was the second most purchased drug by ISP undercover officers. Marijuana topped that list.

Heroin is known by several terms, "smack," "horse," "brown sugar" and "big H" among other names. It is usually seen in the form of brown or white powder, but it can also be found in the form of a black, sticky substance, which some call black tar heroin. The drug originates from the Asian poppy plant. It is transported into Indiana by drug couriers from various sources and sold on the street.

Sgt. Goodin explained that heroin delivers a "high" similar to opiate pain killers like Oxycontin and Opana. Users can inject it or snort or smoke it to get the desired euphoria. It can cost from $400 to $500 a gram on the street in its pure form, which is usually diluted for sale.

"Recent increased enforcement action on prescription medications seems to be one of th reasons that heroin has had such a rise in use," Sgt. Goodin said, adding, "Addicts being unable to manipulate the dosage of painkillers is another reason for the rise." This inability to reckon the proper dosage has led to some deaths and cases of overdoses, all of which have been accidental but still heartbreaking to the families drug abusers have left behind.

Heroin is also very dangerous to use, cautioned Sgt. Goodin. "Addicts and first time users are all exposed to a variety of serious, health-related conditions including fatal overdoses and addictions. People who inject heroin are prone to diseases like HIV, hepatitis and AIDS," the officer advised.

Knowledge of those who deal in such illegal drugs as heroin can be passed on anonymously to the Indiana State Police by calling the ISP Tip Line at 1-800-453-4756. The line is available to accept information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.