

PREVENTING OVERDOSE

There is a lot you can do to reduce the chance of an overdose

Get naloxone

Naloxone can be prescribed by a doctor and is also available directly from a pharmacy. **Naloxone reverses the effects of an opioid overdose.**

Do not mix drugs

Taking more than one drug can increase the risk of overdose, especially if you are also taking methadone. Taking opioid drugs with alcohol or benzos can slow your breathing and heart rate. **Use only one drug at a time.**

Be smart about tolerance

If you've taken a break from using drugs for even a day or two (detox, rehab, jail, using less), your tolerance can drop quickly and so could you. Buying from a different person or batch can mean that you're not used to the gear. **If you've taken a break or are using something new, try a small amount first.**

Learn about half-life

The half-life of a drug is the time it takes for the concentration of it in your body to be reduced by half. Some drugs have a longer half-life than others. There are drugs you may have taken yesterday that can still cause you to drop if you have a hit today. Some benzos, including diazepam (Valium®), have a long half-life. Depending on your health, age, how much you've been taking, and how long you've been using, the half-life may be as long as 50 or 60 hours. **Think about what you've used and when.**

Be careful with medications

Some medications are a lot stronger than illegal drugs. Fentanyl is about 20 to 50 times stronger than heroin. **Don't assume medications are safer than illegal drugs.**

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Try not to use alone or in an unfamiliar place

You are more likely to die if you use alone. If you choose to use alone, tell someone and arrange to check in with them a few minutes later. **Think about where you're using; if you drop, will you be found?**

Think about other ways to use

Injecting drugs instead of swallowing or snorting increases your risk of overdose because less is needed to get the same effect. It's a lot harder to predict the dosage amount when injecting.

Consider smoking, snorting, or shafting.

Look after your health

Health problems, especially those that affect your lungs, heart, kidney, or liver, make it harder for your body to tolerate drugs. Infections and dehydration can also increase your risk of overdose.

See a health professional and act on any concerns.

History of overdose

If you've overdosed in the past, you may have damage to your kidneys, liver, brain, and other organs. **This increases your risk of future overdose.**

Keep drugs away from kids

Keep all medications out of the reach of kids, and make sure take-away doses are locked away (e.g. in a cupboard, drawer, cash box, or safe). **Accidentally taking medications or illegal drugs can lead to serious harm and may be fatal.**

If someone accidentally takes opioids or may be overdosing, call 911 immediately. Tell them what happened and follow their direction, including administering naloxone if you have it.

Steve's Law mandates that a person who seeks medical assistance for someone who is overdosing cannot be prosecuted for possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia if found as a result of the person seeking help. The overdose victim also cannot be prosecuted.

