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# OVERDOSE PREVENTION





## HOW TO **PROTECT YOURSELF** FROM AN **OVERDOSE**

- **TEST THE STRENGTH OF A DRUG BEFORE USING IT.** Use half your normal amount to test safely how strong the drug is before using it.
- **BEWARE OF LOW TOLERANCE FOLLOWING A PERIOD OF ABSTINENCE** (after detoxification, drug treatment or time in jail). Use half your normal amount to test safely how strong the drug is. Wait for a few hours and then proceed to use your usual dose.
- **DO NOT MIX DRUGS** (especially opiates with alcohol or medications such as Xanax, Lexotanil, Ativan, Rivotril).
- **AVOID TAKING MEDICATIONS PRIOR TO USING DRUGS.** The combined effect of sedative drugs depresses the central nervous system to the point where someone can stop breathing.  
Opiates include heroin, morphine, codeine, and Tramal.

\* More overdoses happen when people use alone:  
Try to avoid using alone but if you have to, let someone know where you are and how long you intend to be.



## REMEMBER!

ANYONE WHO USES DRUGS IS AT RISK OF OVERDOSE.

## OVERDOSE SYMPTOMS

Someone may be overdosing if she/he:

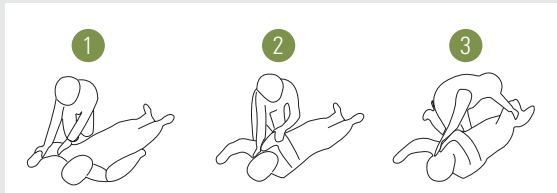
- has difficulty breathing or is breathing slowly.
- is snoring deeply (deep snoring can be associated with breathing difficulties).
- turns blue in color.
- is drooling and experiencing muscular contractions.
- is not easily (or at all) woken up.

## WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF AN **OVERDOSE**

- **TRY** to remain calm.
- **CALL** an ambulance or the Red Cross on 140.
- **STAY** with the person until help arrives.
- **MAKE SURE** there are no foreign objects in the mouth (like loose dentures and vomit) by looking in the mouth and removing any obstructions.
- **CHECK** if the person is conscious by calling their name and pressing your knuckles firmly into their breastbone.
- **OPEN THE AIRWAYS** by tilting the head back and lifting the chin. Straighten their legs.
- **IN CASE OF NO RESPONSE**, check breathing and pulse.
- **IF UNCONSCIOUS**, place the person in recovery position.



## THE RECOVERY POSITION



- 1 PLACE THE ARM** nearest to you at right angles to their body.
- 2 PULL THE ARM** furthest from you across their chest, putting the back of their hand against their cheek.
- 3 HOLD THE LEG** furthest from you above the knee and move it upward across their leg, ensuring that the hip and knee are bent at right angles.
- 4 TILT THEIR HEAD** back to ensure they can breathe easily.

## REMEMBER!



YOU ARE AT RISK OF HAVING AN OVERDOSE REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU ARE INJECTING OR SNIFFING HEROIN.

## BEWARE OF MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERNING WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE OVERDOSES

### 1 INJECTING WITH SALT WATER WILL NOT STOP THE OVERDOSE

Injecting patients with salt water in hospitals is done to keep a vein 'open' so they can inject medication. The salt doesn't affect the overdose at all.

### 2 WALKING THE PERSON AROUND WILL NOT HELP.

- It makes things worse because it wastes time.
- There is a risk they might fall.
- Heart rate increases with exercise: drugs will be absorbed into their bloodstream even faster.

### 3 GIVING THE PERSON A COLD BATH WILL NOT WAKE THEM UP

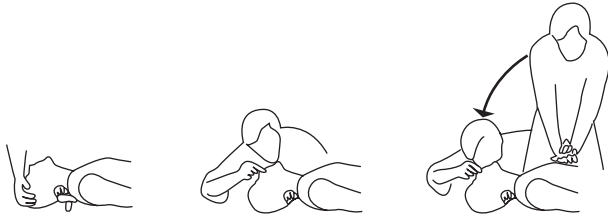
- They could also easily drown or die of cold.
- If you know of someone this worked for, they were just lucky and hadn't taken a lethal dose.

### 4 SLAPPING, BITING, OR BURNING WILL NOT HELP.

You can tell if someone is unconscious by rubbing your knuckles on the middle of their chest. If this doesn't wake them up, nothing but calling an ambulance will.



## WHAT NEXT?



If the person is not breathing, start mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

- **PINCH** the nose to close it.
- **PRESS** your mouth to their open mouth and give a slow steady breath enough to make the person's chest rise.
- **TAKE** your mouth away and let them breathe out naturally.
- **PACE** yourself by giving one breath every 5 to 6 seconds.

**/// OVERDOSE IS THE LARGEST CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS. OVERDOSE CAN BE PREVENTED. ///**



## CALLING AN AMBULANCE

**MEMBERS OF THE MEDICAL STAFF IN HOSPITALS ARE REQUIRED TO CALL THE POLICE IN CASE OF AN OVERDOSE.**

**IF YOU ARE WORRIED**, take your friend to the hospital and leave immediately or call an ambulance and just say "I cannot wake my friend up". You do not need to mention a drug overdose.



## REMEMBER!

DEATH OCCURS THREE HOURS AFTER DRUG USE, WHICH MEANS IT IS HIGHLY POSSIBLE TO SAVE THEIR LIFE. A PERSON'S LIFE MAY DEPEND ON WHETHER THEY ARE TAKEN TO THE HOSPITAL OR NOT.

