



# OVERDOSE PREVENTION

An overdose, sometimes referred to as OD for short, happens when the body is overwhelmed by a very large amount (too much for your body to handle) of a drug or a combination of drugs. It's possible to overdose on many types of drugs if misused, including alcohol as well as prescribed medications. Opioids are now the most common drugs involved in overdose deaths in the United States.

## ARE YOU AT RISK?

If you misuse any substance, you are at risk of overdosing. There are things you can do that increase your risk of an overdose. Being aware of them can help reduce your chances of overdosing.

- If you have withdrawal symptoms when you haven't used
- Prior overdose
- Taking a large amount of the drug at once
- Dropping out of substance use treatment
- Increasing the amount of the drug you use over time
- Not seeking emergency help when needed
- Injecting a drug into your body
- Recently released from prison
- Previous suicide attempts
- Beginning drug use again after having stopped for a period of time
- Mixing opioids with benzos, alcohol, other opioids or with methamphetamine or cocaine





- Mixing opioids with benzos, alcohol, other opioids or with methamphetamine or cocaine
- Using opioid pain medications more often or at a larger amount than prescribed for you
- Using someone else's opioid pain medications, they may be too strong for you
- Mixing downers such as benzodiazepines-Xanax, barbiturates-Phenobarbital, alcohol, or other opioids-oxycotin
- If you have medical problems
- You use long-acting opioids such as methadone or powerful opioids such as fentanyl

## TIPS TO REDUCE YOUR CHANCES OF EXPERIENCING AN OVERDOSE

*If possible, do not use. There is no safe dose of opioids. But IF you do use....*



**Go Slow** - Not taking drugs for even a few days can drop your body's ability to handle the amount you used before, making your usual "amount" an overdose, which can result in death.

**Wait** - If you choose to use, wait long enough after you use to feel the effects before you decide to use again. Do not mix drugs with other drugs or alcohol, it increases your risk of overdose.

**Let Someone Know** - Always let someone know you're using opioids so that they can check on you. Use where help is available, do not use alone. Many who overdose do so when using alone.





**Get Naloxone**-learn how to use it before you needed it. You can also visit the VitAL website to get FREE Narcan.

<https://vitalabama.com/free-narcan/>

**Talk to Someone** - If your struggling and need to talk call the R.O.S.S. Helpline at 1-844-307-1760.



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### *Know what you are taking*

- You can go online to [www.drugs.com/pill\\_identification.html](http://www.drugs.com/pill_identification.html) to learn what pills you are taking, and the dose amount.
- Opioids include heroin and prescription pain medications like: Vicodin, OxyContin, Percocet, Dilaudid, Fentanyl, MS Contin, and Methadone.
- Opioids slow down your breathing. In an overdose, your breathing slows down too much or stops completely. If the brain can't get enough oxygen you can die.
- You can overdose in minutes or even hours after you've used opioids. You may start out just feeling really sleepy, but eventually you might pass out and stop breathing.
- Know the difference between extended release and long and short acting medication, not knowing could lead to an overdose. Taking 5mg of Vicodin is not the same as taking 5mg of Percocet or 5mg of Methadone. The same amount of two different drugs may have different effects that can lead to you overdosing.



### ***Beware of Fentanyl***

Fentanyl is a powerful opioid that is up to 100 times stronger than morphine and 50 times stronger than heroin. It is both a prescribed drug, as well as a drug that is also made and used illegally. **Fentanyl that is illegally made is dangerous.** Illegally created fentanyl is sold as a powder, dropped onto blotter paper, put in eye droppers and nasal sprays, or made into counterfeit pills that look like other prescription pills. Fentanyl is moving through the street market and comes in the form of a white, gray or tan powder and can be injected, smoked, or snorted.

**Fentanyl is also being mixed with other drugs**, such as heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, and MDMA without the user knowing which often leads to overdose and at times death.

### ***Avoid using medications other than as prescribed***

Prescription medications can take a long time to have their full effect. Keep this in mind if you think the medication is not working fast enough. Avoid chewing, cutting, crushing, or dissolving opioid tablets, capsules or patches. Talk to your doctor if you need to take more medication than prescribed to get pain relief—you may need a different amount or type of medication. **REMEMBER:** Let your doctor know all medications you are taking and if you are in a drug treatment program!





## WHAT IS NALOXONE?

Naloxone is a medicine commonly known as Narcan that can be used to temporarily reverse an overdose caused by opioid drugs and help a person start breathing again. When given during an overdose, naloxone blocks the effects of opioids in the brain which helps the person to start breathing again. It can be given as a shot in a muscle or as a nasal spray. It is important to encourage your family and significant others to learn how to use naloxone. If you have naloxone, tell family and significant others where you keep it. Naloxone works rapidly and will not harm the person receiving it.

To get FREE Narcan, visit VitAL at the link below for more information.

<https://vitalalabama.com/free-narcan/>



## THE SIGNS OF AN OVERDOSE

- The individual can't be woken up
- Slow or no breathing
- Pale, gray skin
- Blue lips or fingertips
- Vomiting
- Face is pale and clammy
- Slow, erratic or no pulse
- Snoring or gurgling noises while asleep or nodding
- No response when you yell the person's name or rub the middle of their chest with your knuckles



## WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE OVERDOSES AND IS UNCONSCIOUS

- Try waking them, yell their name, rub chest bone with your knuckles.
- If they are not breathing or have very slow breathing: Start Rescue Breathing: Pinch nose, tilt head 1 breath every 5 seconds.
- Call 911 - say that the person isn't breathing.
- If you're alone, put the person in the Recovery Position before calling 911.
- Consider using Naloxone if you have it/can use it.
- Continue rescue breathing until Rescue arrives. Tell them what the person took, how much, and any other information that could help save the victim's life.



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