

How can I help someone who overdoses?

- Make sure you're in a safe environment.
- If stimulants (such as amphetamines) are thought to be involved, a person may feel hot, anxious or agitated. Try to move them somewhere cooler and quieter. Or try to make the place quieter.
- If depressants, like alcohol or opiates they are likely to be drowsy/sleepy -try and wake person by shouting and shaking them gently.
- Call 999 and ask for an ambulance.
- Place them in recovery position.
- If it's an opioid overdose use naloxone (you can get trained in our service).
- Stay with them and wait for the ambulance.
- Keep an eye on them, people can go in and out of consciousness.

How you can reduce risks

- The user should first use a little bit every time he buys a new supply: quality might be very different even if the drug user buy with the same dealer.
- Tolerance reduces when the drug user has not used even for a few days use a smaller amount to start.
- If a drug user uses in a hurry or in a strange environment they are a greater risk.

- Higher risk when drug user is alone: who will help them?
- Mostly happens with injecting, but can also happen when smoking/orally/sniffing.
- Don't use with other substances such as alcohol, benzo's and prescribed medication.
- Ask your service about naloxone training and carry a kit.

Find out more

If you would like more information or support on overdose prevention or you are affected by someone else's use please contact us at Inclusion Recovery Hampshire.

Information is also available at:

NHS Website: www.nhs.uk

Talk to Frank Website: www.talktofrank.com

HOW TO CONTACT US

NORTH: 01782 639856
StarsNorth@mpft.nhs.uk

EAST: 01283 741053
StarsEast@mpft.nhs.uk

WEST: 01785 270080
StarsWest@mpft.nhs.uk

Or visit: www.staffstars.org

You. Me. Us

This leaflet was created by:  **NHS inclusion** Part of Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust Find out more at www.inclusion.org

Overdose prevention

What you need to know!



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What is overdose prevention?

Overdose deaths are far too frequent, and they are both predictable and preventable.

An overdose means having too much of a drug (or combination of drugs) for your body to be able to cope with.

Overdose prevention can make a difference and save lives by alerting people to risk, and improving the response to overdose by services and drug users.

The best ways to prevent overdose deaths are;

- Improve opioid prescribing (if opioid-user)
- Reduce exposure to drug (opioids/alcohol/stimulants)
- Educate on misuse of drugs and risk factors.
- Suitable treatment and psycho-social support

The myths

- People who overdose are typically those who are new to using,
- It's rarely those who have been using for a long time.
- It won't happen to me.
- You can only overdose by injecting.
- You can only overdose from heroin or other opiates.

The truth is that anyone is susceptible to taking too much and overdose. There are risk factors that increase your risk of overdosing but the drugs unless they are prescribed and taken as intended, you never know the strength, quantity of drugs being purchased illegally.

The fact is that anyone that misuses drugs is at risk of an overdose.

What does an overdose look like?

There are a number of signs and symptoms that show someone has overdosed, and these differ with the type of drug used. All drugs can cause an overdose, including prescription medication prescribed by a doctor.

It's important to know your correct dosage, what drugs definitely should not be mixed, and know to seek help if you feel you are not in control of your drug use. Recognising an overdose can be difficult. If you aren't sure, it is best to treat the situation like an overdose - you could save a life.

Depressant:

- Shallow breathing or no signs of breathing at all
- Snoring or gurgling sounds (this can mean that a person's airway is partly blocked)
- Blue lips or fingertips
- Floppy arms and legs
- No response to stimulus
- Disorientation
- Unrousable (can't be woken up)
- Unconsciousness

Stimulant:

- Chest pain
- Seizures
- Severe headache
- High temperature (overheating, but not sweating)

Alcohol:

- Disorientation
- Loss of coordination
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Irregular or slow breathing (less than eight breaths a minute)
- Blue-tinged or pale skin
- Low body temperature (hypothermia)
- Stupor (being conscious but unresponsive)
- Unconsciousness (passing out)

- Difficulty breathing
- Agitation and paranoia
- Hallucinations
- Unconsciousness
- Disorientation/confusion



Those at risk of overdose

There are a number of factors that increase risk of overdose which you should try and avoid:

- Injecting drugs
- Mixing drugs (particularly opioids, benzodiazepines and alcohol)
- Using drugs alone
- Change in strength of drugs
- Change of source of drugs
- Loss of tolerance
- Using too much of a drug and using too quickly

Risky times

There are a number of times when people are most at risk from overdosing:

- Leaving prison
- Leaving hospital
- Leaving detox
- Leaving rehab
- At the start and end of substitute prescription
- During stressful times
- When homeless or in temporary housing