

Frequently Asked Questions About Opioid Overdose

What is an accidental opioid overdose?

An overdose is when a person takes more medicine or drugs than their body can handle. Overdoses can cause harm to your body and even death. An accidental overdose is when a person did not mean to take too much of a medicine or drug. Examples of an accidental opioid overdose are:

- Taking medicines or drugs by mistake
- Taking more than the doctor prescribed
- Taking the wrong drug or medicine

Who is at risk of an opioid overdose?

Some people are more likely to overdose on opioids than other people. Here are some things that might put you or your loved one at a higher risk of overdosing:

- Taking high dosages of opioids every day
- Changing your dosage without talking to your doctor first
- Drinking alcohol while taking opioids
- Taking sedating medicines like benzodiazepines (for example, Valium, Klonopin or Xanax), muscle relaxants or sleeping pills while on opioids
- Taking opioids not prescribed to you
- Taking illegal opioids like heroin or fentanyl
- Having conditions like:
 - Kidney disease
 - Asthma
 - Sleep apnea
 - Emphysema
- Being older than 65



What are the signs and symptoms of an opioid overdose?

If you think a person you are with has overdosed, call 9-1-1 right away. Some signs that they may have overdosed are:

- Slow shallow breathing or stopped breathing
- Can't respond or communicate
- Small pupils
- Extremely cold skin that has turned blue in color
- Confusion
- Nausea/ queasiness or vomiting

What do I do if I see someone experiencing an opioid overdose?

Call 9-1-1 right away.

Here are some other things you can do:

- Give them naloxone (Narcan) if you have it
- Turn the person to their side to help keep them from choking
- Stay with them until medical help arrives

What is naloxone?

Naloxone is a medicine that you can give to someone you think is overdosing on opioids and who is not breathing or responding. It is a safe medicine that can reverse symptoms of opioid overdoses and save lives. **Please be aware that naloxone does not help someone who has overdosed on a drug that is not an opioid.**



For more information:

- Substance Abuse Treatment information: **Call 2-1-1**
Or go to: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/samhs/gethelp/>
- Call the Poison Center line: **1-800-222-1222**
- Here is a video for how to use one form of naloxone (Narcan):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPy168bpe6A>

MaineHealth

MaineHealth.org