

Preventing overdose

What is the risk?

- Strong opioids (fentanyl or carfentanil) are often mixed with other street drugs like ecstasy (MDMA), crystal meth, crack and others. So if you use any street drugs, you are at risk of an opioid overdose (OD).
- In an opioid overdose, you pass out, your breathing slows or stops, and you may die.
- It is often impossible to tell if a powder or pill contains fentanyl. You can't see it, smell it or taste it. Even your dealer might not know what he or she is selling, or how strong it is.
- Other opioids include oxycodone (oxys) (OxyContin, OxyNeo, Percocet, Oxycocet), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), fentanyl (e.g., carfentanil, acetyl fentanyl), heroin, morphine, methadone and codeine (Tylenol #1, 2, 3, 4).
- An overdose can happen however you use opioids: swallowing or chewing pills, injecting, snorting, smoking, using a patch and other ways.
- If you are also using other sedating substances—for example, other opioids, alcohol, benzodiazepines (e.g., Xanax, Valium or Ativan) or GHB—the risk of overdose is even higher.

Signs of opioid overdose

- You can't wake the person up.
- Breathing is slow or has stopped.
- They make gurgling, snoring or choking sounds.
- Lips and nails are blue or grey.
- Body is limp.
- Skin is cold and clammy.
- Pupils are very small.

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- **Be aware:** There's no way to tell if your supply is mixed with deadly fentanyl or carfentanil.
- **Tell someone:** If you use opioids, carry ID that says you do, and tell people you trust.
- **Don't use alone** or use somewhere you will be found quickly if you OD.
- **Don't mix drugs:** Mixing benzos or alcohol with opioids increases the risk of overdose.
- **Go slow:** Use a very small test dose at first, especially with a new supply.
- **Tolerance to opioids** is quickly lost: If you have not used for a few days, use a smaller amount.
- **Carry a naloxone kit:** Naloxone is a medication that can save a life when there is an overdose. The Ontario government has a website that lists pharmacies where you can get a naloxone kit, and training on how to use it: www.ontario.ca/page/where-get-free-naloxone-kit.

What to do if you see an overdose

- Call 911: Canadian law protects you from possession charges when you report an overdose.
- Give naloxone if you can.
- Stay with the person until the ambulance arrives.



Other things you can do

- Start treatment: If you use opioids, buprenorphine (in Suboxone) or methadone therapy, and talk therapy, can help you make healthy changes.
- Learn CPR.
- Get harm reduction supplies:
 - The Works, 277 Victoria Street, Toronto
 - Call 211 to find other locations.
- Report bad drugs anonymously at ReportBadDrugsTO.ca

Call **911** in case of overdose