



Opioid Overdoses: What To Do

Opioids—like fentanyl, morphine, oxycodone and hydromorphone—are medications that can help relieve pain. However, opioids are also available illegally. **Illegal opioids are any opioids that are made, shared or sold illegally.**

How can opioids cause an overdose?

Opioids affect how your brain controls your breathing. If you take more opioids than your body can handle, you will start to show signs and symptoms of an overdose, such as:

- Slow, weak or no breathing
- Blue lips or nails
- Dizziness and confusion
- Can't be woken up
- Choking, gurgling or snoring sounds
- Drowsiness or difficulty staying awake

Protect yourself from an overdose.

If you use illegal opioids:

- **don't mix** them with alcohol, or other drugs
- **don't use alone**—stick with a friend
- **know the signs** of an opioid overdose
- carry a **naloxone** kit

If you use prescription opioids:

- only use as directed
- don't mix them with alcohol, or other drugs
- never take extra for intense pain
- talk to your doctor if your medication is not relieving pain

If you witness an overdose, stay and help

Witnessing an overdose can be scary, as a person's breathing becomes weaker, shallower, or even stops completely.

Overdoses are a medical emergency. Staying at the scene to help can save someone's life. **If you've taken drugs, or have some on you, you are protected from simple drug possession charges** by the **Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act**. This law applies to the person who seeks help and anyone else at the scene when help arrives.



Overdoses can happen if you take:

- an opioid **not prescribed** for you
- **more** opioids **than prescribed** for you, such as a higher dose
- an opioid **with alcohol or other** drugs (e.g., anxiety medication, muscle relaxants, or sleeping pills)
- an **opioid that has been tampered with** (e.g., broken or crushed)
- **illegally** produced or obtained opioids

If you have stopped taking opioids for a while and start taking them again, you can be at risk of an overdose because your body is not used to the drug anymore.

If you suspect an opioid overdose, you should:

- ✓ Call 9-1-1 (or your local emergency help line) and stay at the scene
- ✓ Give naloxone, if you have it
- ✓ Know that the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act protects you from simple drug possession charges