



# Responding to an opioid overdose

**Call 911**  
**Give breaths**  
**Use naloxone**  
**Stay and help**

Canada's Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act may protect you.

## Signs of a typical opioid overdose

Opioids are depressants that slow the body down, especially our breathing. They include fentanyl, carfentanyl, heroin, oxycodone, codeine, morphine, methadone, hydromorphone and others.

-  Not moving and can't be woken
-  Slow or no breathing
-  Choking, gurgling sounds or snoring
-  Tiny or pinpoint pupils
-  Blue or grey/ashen lips and nails
-  Cold or clammy skin

The drug supply is unpredictable and always changing. Not all opioid overdoses look the same (for example, some may experience a delayed onset of typical symptoms, muscle rigidity or other symptoms).

**When in doubt, use naloxone.** It will cause no harm if an opioid is not present.

# SAVE ME steps



### STIMULATE

Try speaking loudly, rubbing the sternum (chest bone) or pinching. Unresponsive? Call 911.



### AIRWAY

Check airway. Tilt head and lift the chin to open airway.



### VENTILATE

1 breath every 5 seconds (and ongoing).



### EVALUATE

Are they breathing?



### MEDICATION

1 dose of naloxone (check the time).



### EVALUATE & SUPPORT

Keep giving breaths. Give another dose of naloxone every 3 minutes until breathing normally.

### Keep giving breaths.

Brain damage can occur within minutes. Naloxone works in 2-3 minutes.

For those trained in CPR: If a person is found and their heart has stopped, give chest compressions too.

### If you have to leave the person unattended, put them in the recovery position.

Naloxone temporarily reverses an overdose and wears off in 20-90 minutes. When naloxone wears off, an overdose can return. Stay with the person until emergency services arrive.

## Call 911. Stay and help.

Canada's Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act may protect you.

More at: [canada.ca/opioids](http://canada.ca/opioids)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>The law <b>DOES</b> provide protection from charges for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple possession (personal use)</li> <li>• Violation of pre-trial release, probation order, conditional sentence or parole related to simple possession</li> </ul> | <p>The law <b>DOES NOT</b> provide protection from charges for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selling illegal drugs (trafficking)</li> <li>• Offences other than drug possession</li> <li>• Any outstanding arrest warrants</li> <li>• Violation of pre-trial release, probation order, conditional sentence or parole for an offence <i>other than simple possession</i></li> </ul> |
|--|---|

## Tips for safer use



**Try to use with at least 1 other person** or use overdose prevention sites where available.



**Start low, go slow.** Try to prepare doses yourself. Use a small amount first. Drugs may be stronger than you realize, especially if you're buying from a new dealer. Check drugs when available.



**Try not to mix substances.** Avoid using alcohol. Prescription drugs increase overdose risk (for example, benzos).



**Take care of yourself.** Use less when you're having health issues or you haven't used for a while, for example if you've recently been released from prison or the hospital or are returning from travel.



**Have an overdose plan.** Carry naloxone, know how to use it and let others know you have it. Make sure someone can call 911. Try to stagger use so not everyone is using at the same time.

toward  
THE heart.com  
BCCDC HARM REDUCTION SERVICES

 Canada's source for HIV and hepatitis C information

# Responding to stimulant overuse and overdose



There is **NO ANTIDOTE** to stimulant overdose.

**Call 911**  
**Stay and help**

Canada's Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act may protect you.

toward  
THE heart.com  
BCCDC HARM REDUCTION SERVICES

**CATIE** Canada's source for HIV and hepatitis C information

## SIGNS of stimulant USE

Stimulants or “uppers” speed the body up, like **amphetamines, crystal meth, cocaine, MDMA (Ecstasy or Molly), Ritalin, Adderall and caffeine.**



Rigid, jerking limbs



Fast or irregular pulse or chest pains



Skin feels hot, sweating or severe headaches



Anxiety, paranoia, confusion, agitation or hallucinations

## What to do if someone has OVERUSED stimulants

They may be *overamping* and need support and rest.  
Keep the person comfortable, conscious and hydrated.

- Remove any object nearby that could hurt them. Do not restrain them or put anything in their mouth.
- Encourage them to avoid using any more substances at this time.
- Provide a quiet, calm environment.
- Give them water and keep them hydrated.
- Place cool, wet cloths on their forehead, back of neck and armpits.
- Reassure them that symptoms will subside.

## Signs of stimulant OVERDOSE

If a person is experiencing any of these signs, **call 911. Stay and help.** Get someone with training to do CPR if the heart has stopped.



Crushing chest pain



Seizures



Unconscious or in-and-out

**There is no antidote to stimulant overdose. Call 911.**

Naloxone will not reverse a stimulant overdose but it can still help if a person has taken a mix of drugs. When in doubt, use naloxone. It's safe.



## Call 911. Stay and help.

Canada's Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act may protect you.

More at: [canada.ca/opioids](https://canada.ca/opioids)

The law **DOES** provide protection from charges for:

- Simple possession (personal use)
- Violation of pre-trial release, probation order, conditional sentence or parole related to simple possession

The law **DOES NOT** provide protection from charges for:

- Selling illegal drugs (trafficking)
- Offences other than drug possession
- Any outstanding arrest warrants
- Violation of pre-trial release, probation order, conditional sentence or parole for an offence *other than simple possession*

## Tips for safer use



Try to use with at least 1 other person or use overdose prevention sites where available.



**Start low, go slow.** Try to prepare doses yourself. Use a small amount first. Drugs may be stronger than you realize, especially if you're buying from a new dealer. Check drugs when available.



Try not to mix substances. Avoid using alcohol.



**Take care of yourself.** Try to eat something – you won't feel like eating after using. Keep water or juice to drink (non-alcoholic) on you to prevent dehydration.



**Have a safety plan.** Tell someone you trust that you are using and let them know where you will be. Know the signs of stimulant overuse.

Production of this document has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

© 2020, BCCDC Harm Reduction Services. All rights reserved. Revised in 2024.

CATIE Ordering Centre Catalogue Number: ATI-70214 (aussi disponible en français, ATI-70215).