

OPIOID OVERDOSE

OPIOID DRUGS depress the central nervous system. They cause breathing to slow down or even stop in the case of overdose. Any opioid can cause an overdose.


Signs of opioid overdose:

- Small contracted pupils
- Drowsiness
- Slow breathing, difficulty breathing (sounds like choking or gurgling)
- The person might 'nod off' but may still respond to a light shake or loud noise
- Fingernails or lips turn blue
- Limp muscles
- Slurred speech



Try this line:

**"Hey, I notice you are using opiates?
Do you need a naloxone kit?"**



Opioid overdose is a medical emergency. If the person is unresponsive, call or have someone CALL 911.

When calling 911 for emergency help, neither the intoxicated individual or the person calling can be charged with possession of controlled substances, whether or not they have also used drugs.



IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

- Start low and go slow. Heroin and any other opioid pills can be laced with fentanyl or its analogues. Even very small amounts of fentanyl can cause an overdose.
- Tolerance to opioids can change even after a short period of not using drugs. Sometimes after only a few days. The drop in tolerance makes the regular dose much stronger and more dangerous. People often overdose after time spent in rehab, detox, prison, or the hospital.
- Tolerance to opioids can build quickly. This means more drugs are needed to have the same effect. Tolerance can develop to many of the drug's effects – except for the effect on breathing. Risk of opioid overdose always exists – no matter how experienced a person is.
- Overdose can happen from injecting, smoking, snorting or swallowing opioids.
- Mixing drugs increases risk of overdose.
- Injecting drugs in a familiar place where people are comfortable and don't have to rush can reduce the risk of overdose.
- Doing too much at once, or too much over a short period of time will increase risk of overdose.



Try this line:

“You mentioned you just got out of jail (hospital, detox). Do you need naloxone?”

**IF SOMEONE IS HAVING
AN OPIOID OVERDOSE**

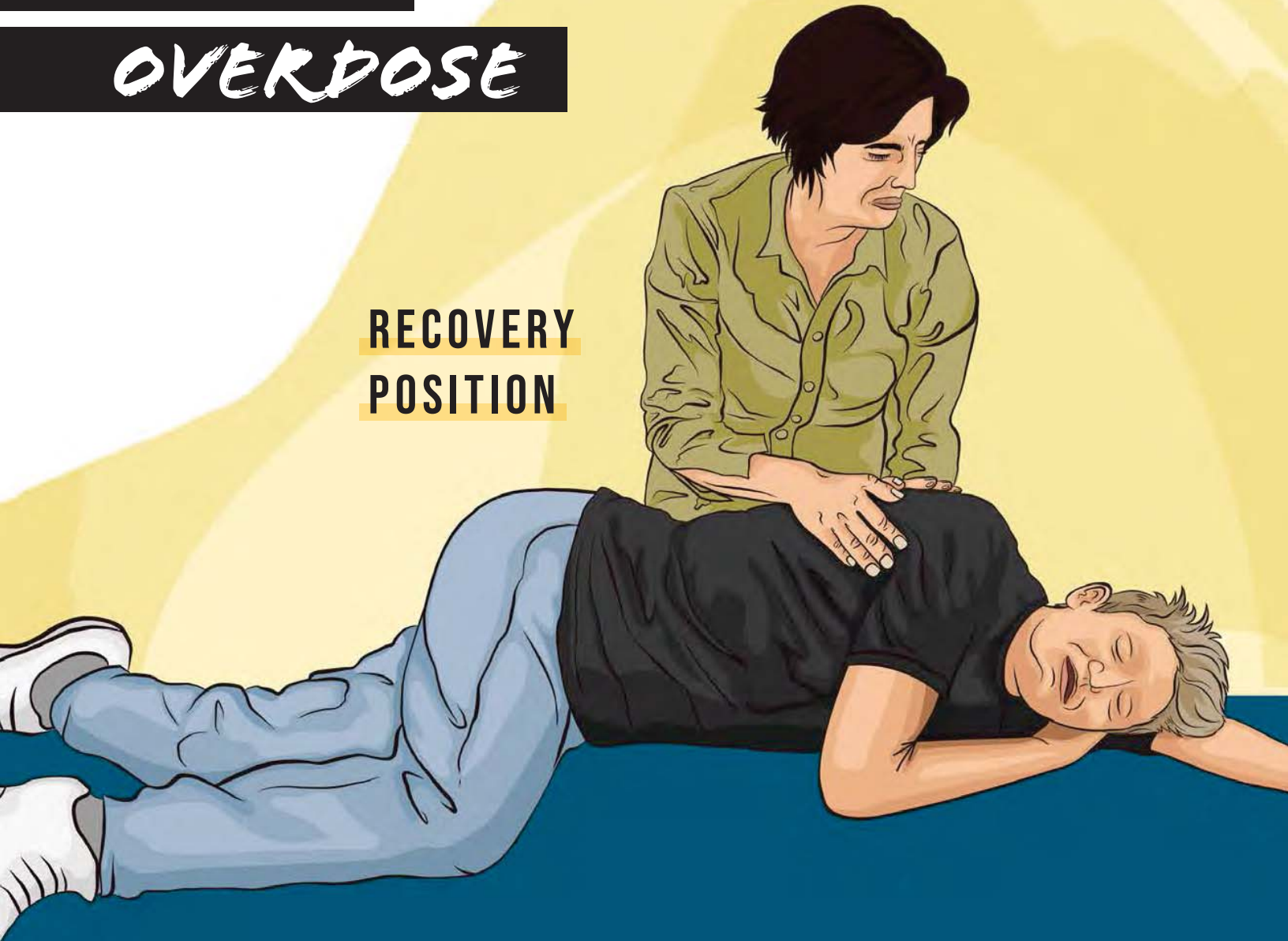
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IF SOMEONE IS HAVING AN

OPIOD

OVERDOSE

**RECOVERY
POSITION**



- Try to wake them by calling their name or speaking to them loudly.
- If unresponsive, try shoulder squeezes or pushing a pen against the person's fingernail. If no reaction they might be unconscious. Don't slap or be forceful.
- If the person responds, try to have a simple conversation with them.
- Monitor their breathing and responsiveness.
- Try keeping the person awake.

HOW TO RESPOND

- **CALL 911** (or get someone else to call) as soon as signs of overdose are evident. Signs include:
 - Not breathing or has very slow and shallow breathing
 - Totally unresponsive
 - Worsening in their condition
- **Keep them safe until emergency care arrives.** If that is not possible, leave their door open with a note saying what drug the person used. This will help paramedics.
- **If you have to leave the person before paramedics arrive, put them in the recovery position.** This will make sure they don't choke if they start vomiting. It will keep their airway clear.
- **Learn how to put a person in the recovery position, it can save their life. Try to keep them awake.**
 1. Position the person on their side
 2. Their body should be supported by a bent knee
 3. Their face is turned to the side
 4. Tilt their head backwards and ensure airway is clear
 5. Place arm at side and other arm across chest with hand against cheek
- **If the person is not breathing start rescue breathing right away.**
- **Make sure the person having an overdose is seen by trained medical professionals.**
- **Naloxone can reverse the opioid overdose but the person may have other medical conditions that need to be attended to.** People who survive an overdose are at risk of other complications like pneumonia and heart issues.
- **Naloxone can only reverse an overdose caused by opioids. It will not reverse an overdose caused by other drugs. It is a temporary reversal of opioid overdose. If opioids are still in the system after naloxone effects wear off (20-90 minutes), the overdose can return.**
- **Do not inject the person with any substance other than naloxone to try to reverse the overdose.** Naloxone is the only safe and appropriate treatment for an opioid overdose.
- **Never put the person in a cold bath or shower.** This increases risk of falling, drowning, or going into shock.

STIMULANT OVERDOSE

Cocaine/crack, crystal meth and other amphetamines are all STIMULANT DRUGS. Overdose from stimulants happens from taking too much drug or a combination of drugs. The following signs and symptoms could be present with an overdose from stimulant drugs:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Passing out
- High body temperature
- Intense sweating
- Racing heartbeat
- Chest pain
- Intense headache
- Seizures
- Muscle cramps
- Shortness of breath or irregular breathing
- Stroke

The faster someone receives medical assistance the greater chance of recovery. Emergency response and medical treatment will depend on:

- The type of drug
- The type of symptoms they are having and how bad they are

If the person is dozing off or feeling sleepy right after using a stimulant it could be a sign of drug contamination with fentanyl or other opioids. Watch for signs that could mean opioid overdose. Opioid overdose requires naloxone.

Risk of overdose increases when people:

- Don't know how much of the drug they are taking
- Use a drug contaminated with other substances like fentanyl or benzodiazepines
- Combine several types of stimulant drugs at the same time
- Use other substances like alcohol and/or benzodiazepines
- Use faster methods of consuming drugs like injecting

IF SOMEONE IS HAVING A STIMULANT OVERDOSE

- **With a stimulant overdose it is important to make sure the person is:**
 - Still breathing
 - The heart is beating
- **CALL 911** (or get someone else to call) as soon as signs of overdose are evident.
- **Signs include:**
 - Seizures
 - Drooling or frothing from the mouth
 - Limb spasms or rigidity
 - Signs of a heart attack, tightening or pain in the chest
 - Not breathing or shallow breathing
 - Signs of a stroke
 - Unable to talk clearly
 - Unable to understand what other people are saying
 - Losing feeling in the face, arms or legs (usually on one side of the body)
- **Try to get the person to slow down and relax.** If they can walk, move them to a quiet space.
- **Keep calm.** Your energy can affect others.
- **Try to keep them awake.**
- **Cool them down with a damp washcloth on their forehead.**
- **If the person is having a seizure, remove any sharp or dangerous items from around them.**
- **Keep them safe until emergency care arrives.** If not possible, leave the door open with a note of what drug the person used. This will ensure paramedics can enter easily and quickly.
- **Do not put the person in a cold shower.**
- **Do not give other substances or home remedies.** It could make things worse.
- **Do not restrain the person in any way or put anything in their mouth.** If the person is unconscious, place them in the recovery position ([see pages 84-85](#)).