

Help Someone in the Event of an Overdose

An overdose happens when a person takes too much of a drug, medication or alcohol. This can happen with prescription medicines, illegal drugs or a mix of substances. Opioid overdoses are a major health concern in the United States. Fentanyl is especially dangerous because it is much stronger than many other opioids and is involved in many overdose deaths.

If you think someone may be having an opioid overdose, act quickly. Fast action can save a life.

Know the signs of an overdose

Common signs include:

- The person will not wake up or respond.
- They are gasping, snoring or having trouble breathing.
- Their breathing is very slow or shallow.
- Their lips or fingertips look blue or gray.
- Their skin feels cold or clammy.

Call 911

If you think someone has overdosed, call 911 right away.

While you wait for help:

- Place the person on their side to help prevent choking.
- Stay with them and keep checking their breathing.

Be ready to tell 911:

- Your exact location.
- Your phone number.
- What drugs, medications or alcohol may have been used, if you know.

Many states have Good Samaritan laws. These laws help protect people who call for emergency help during an overdose.

[More on Page 2](#)

Give naloxone if it is available

Naloxone is a medicine that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose for a short time. It only works if opioids are in the person's body.

Naloxone may come as:

- An injection.
- An auto-injector.
- A nasal spray, such as Narcan®.

Give naloxone as soon as possible if you have it. The medicine can help the person start breathing normally again while waiting for emergency help. Family members, friends, bystanders and emergency workers can all give naloxone.

Stay with the person until help arrives

Even if naloxone is given, the person still needs medical care.

Until first responders arrive:

- Keep the person on their side to help prevent choking.
- If they are not breathing and have no pulse, begin chest compressions if you are trained to do so.
- Stay with the person and watch for changes in their condition.

Remember: If you think someone may be overdosing, call 911 right away. Acting fast can save a life.

#SupportSobriety #RealRecovery

If you or someone you know is struggling with substance use or addiction, call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357.

Reviewed by Medical Director, Doctor of Medicine.