

# preventing overdose

*You can do a lot to reduce the chance of overdose.  
Here are some tips.*

## overdose risk factors

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### mixing drugs

- Taking more than one drug can increase the risk of overdose
  - Taking opioid drugs with alcohol or benzos can slow your breathing and heart rate. This reduces the supply of oxygen to your brain.
- ✓ **Tip:** Try only taking one drug at a time. Learn about half-life and tolerance for the drugs you use.
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### changes in tolerance or using more

- If you've taken a break from using drugs (detox, rehab, jail, using less), your tolerance can drop quickly.
  - Changing your supplier means purity levels may be different to what you are used to.
- ✓ **Tip:** Be aware: try a small amount first.
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### health problems

- Health problems make it harder for your body to deal with drugs.
  - Examples include problems with your heart, lungs, kidney or liver. Infections and dehydration can also increase your risk.
  - Older users may have accumulated health problems.
  - Tobacco smokers may have reduced lung capacity.
- ✓ **Tip:** Look after your health. Get a health check-up and act on any concerns.
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### using alone or in an unfamiliar place

- You're more likely to die if no one can get to you or no one knows where you are.
- ✓ **Tip:** Don't use alone. But if you do, tell someone you are about to use, and arrange to check in with them a few minutes later. Think about where you're using. If you drop, will you be found?

## injecting drugs instead of swallowing or snorting

- Injecting drugs increases your risk of overdose because less is needed to achieve the same effect.
- It's a lot harder to predict the dosage amount when injecting.

✓ **Tip:** Consider other ways of taking drugs. If you do inject, test a small amount first.

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## don't assume pharmaceuticals are less risky

- Some pharmaceuticals are a lot stronger than illicit drugs. Fentanyl can be 80 to 100 times stronger than morphine – and the risk is further increased when using multiple drugs.

✓ **Tip:** Only use one substance at a time, and don't assume pharmaceuticals are safer.

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## history of overdose

- If you've overdosed in the past, you might have damage to your kidneys, liver or brain. This increases your risk of future overdose.

## children or others accidentally taking opioids

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### keep out of reach of children

Accidentally taking pharmaceutical or illicit opioids can lead to serious harm and may be fatal. Keep all opioids out of the reach of children and make sure take-away doses of medicines are locked away (e.g. in a cupboard, drawer, cash box or safe).

If someone accidentally takes opioids, don't delay. Ring 000 straight away, tell them what's happened and follow their direction.

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***Speak to your doctor or an NSP worker about getting naloxone.***

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