

# HOW TO RECOGNIZE AN OVERDOSE

It is not always easy to recognize an overdose while it is happening, but learning common symptoms can help you respond more quickly and in a more appropriate manner. The first signs of overdose can be either heightened effects of the drug, or abnormal side effects.

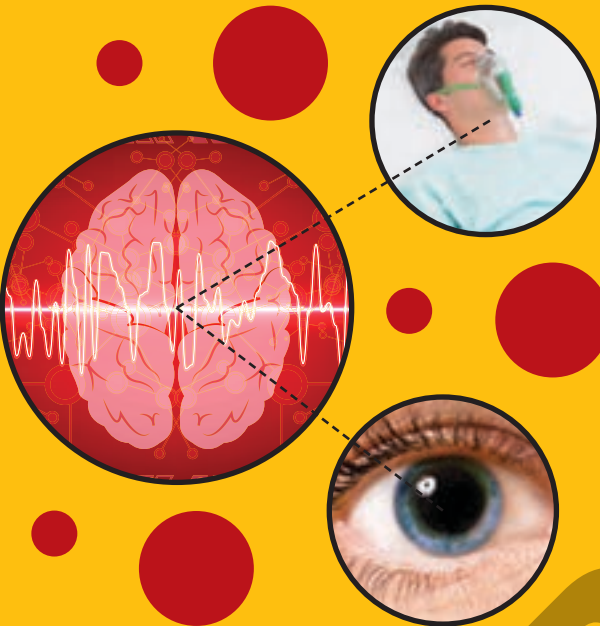
Here are some of the most common signs of a drug overdose:

- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal cramps
- Loss of balance
- Stupor
- Dizziness
- Sweating
- Clammy Skin
- Confusion
- Drowsiness
- Seizures
- Difficulty breathing
- Hallucinations and visual disturbances
- Skin turning blue
- Deep snoring

## Different Drugs = Different Overdose

Knowing what caused the drug overdose is important, so the more you know about the individual and their substance abuse history, the better. Different drugs will cause different overdose symptoms.

Overdose signs for the following drug classes and/or drugs include:



**Depressants** - dilated pupils, shallow breathing, weak or rapid pulse, clammy skin, and coma

**Hallucinogens** - psychosis, seizures and unconsciousness with PCP overdose

**Inhalants** - seizures and unconsciousness

**Marijuana** - paranoia, fatigue, and possible psychosis

**Narcotics** - clammy skin, convulsions, coma, and slow shallow breathing

**Stimulants** - increase in body temperature, increased agitation, hallucinations, and convulsions

The more you know about the overdose and what led up to it, the easier it will be to react properly. While every overdose can be deadly, having detailed information about the individual, their history with substance abuse and the type of drug the person took can increase the effectiveness of the emergency response, and may save a life.

## RESOURCES

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

National Institute on Drug Abuse:

[www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

[www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/resources/data.html](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/resources/data.html)

International Overdose Awareness Day:

[www.overdoseday.com](http://www.overdoseday.com)

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## RECOGNIZING OVERDOSE & WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT



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# What is Naloxone or Narcan?

Naloxone is a prescription medication that can quickly reverse an opioid overdose, it goes by the brand names Narcan® or Evzio®. Naloxone attaches to opioid receptors in the brain blocking the effects of opioid drugs. It can return an overdose victim's breathing that has slowed or even stopped to normal. Naloxone **only** works on **opioid based drugs** like heroin, fentanyl and hydrocodone.

Naloxone is available for at home use in a nasal spray (Narcan®) and an auto-injectable (Evzio®). If someone you care about is struggling with an addiction to prescription opiates or street drugs like heroin, talk to a doctor about keeping a supply of naloxone on hand. When properly administered, naloxone can be a lifesaving treatment in the event of an overdose.



If you have a supply of naloxone on hand and suspect an opiate drug overdose is underway, give the overdose reversal drug while you are on the phone with 9-1-1. This can buy you and the person you care about some time, but it is still important to seek prompt medical attention. Depending on the amount or type of opioids taken an additional dose of naloxone may be needed to fully revive a victim. Each package of opioid reversal drugs usually includes a second dose in case it is needed.

## Overdose is on the Rise

The danger of drug overdose has never been greater. Whether you personally know someone who is suffering with an addiction problem or not, chances are you are aware of the current overdose epidemic. About 64,000 overdose deaths occur in the United States each year, and most are attributed to opioid use. It is important that everyone recognize who is at risk and what the signs and symptoms of a drug overdose are.



**Individuals struggling with drug addiction usually do not intend to overdose. An overdose may occur when:**

- A person takes a regular dose after their tolerance has changed
- A person received a counterfeit drug that was much stronger than they are used to
- A combination of drugs was taken

There are some things you **should not** do. Taking the wrong action could result in great harm. Unless you are directed to do so by the 9-1-1 dispatcher or a medical expert, you should not attempt to make the person overdosing vomit. You should also not give the overdosing person anything to eat or drink, since doing so could interfere with their medical treatment.

You **should** gather up any pill containers or drug packets and provide them to the responding medical personnel. The more known about the substance that was taken, the easier it will be to provide the right medical treatment.

### At Risk for Accidental Overdose

- Age: Young children and the elderly
- Taking numerous medications
- Mental Illness
- Anyone who accidentally takes an incorrect dose of prescribed medication

Any of these factors may lead to an accidental overdose. Young children may find medication and take it believing it is candy. Elderly people may confuse their dosage or accidentally take the wrong medications together.

These simple accidents can lead to overdose or death. Being aware of what medications are in your home and properly storing and managing them can help prevent tragedy.

### At Risk for Intentional Overdose

- Abuse of prescription or street drugs
- Long term drug use (chronic illness or pain)
- Recent treatment for drug abuse
- Mixing alcohol with drugs
- Previous overdose or drug intoxication history

### What To Do If You Suspect a Drug Overdose

Here is what you should do if you suspect an overdose is taking place:

- Immediately call 9-1-1 to report the situation
- Remain calm and in control
- Gather evidence and information
- Check to see if the person is breathing
- If unconscious, lay the victim on their side to reduce the chance of choking

If you suspect a friend or family member is suffering from a drug overdose, it is important to act quickly. Before you do anything else, you should immediately call 9-1-1 and report the situation. The 9-1-1 dispatcher can provide further instructions and help you respond correctly.

If the individual is unconscious but still breathing, try to place them on their side. Tilt the individual's head back gently, then lift the chin to keep the airway open. Continue to check the individual's breathing, and report any changes to the 9-1-1 dispatcher while you await professional medical attention.



## A Life or Death Emergency

A drug overdose is always an emergency situation. How you respond, and the speed with which you react, could literally mean the difference between life and death.