

WORKSHEET

Overdose Prevention Tips

This worksheet is a component of *Guide to Developing and Managing Overdose Prevention and Take-Home Naloxone Projects*, produced by Harm Reduction Coalition. More information at harmreduction.org

This worksheet highlights common overdose risks and provides prevention tips.

We understand that every prevention message might not be applicable or pragmatic in every situation; we hope these tips can provide and messages can be shared and adapted as needed.

More information on each risk factor can be found at harmreduction.org.

Mixing Drugs:

- Use one drug at a time.
- Use less of each drug.
- Try to avoid mixing alcohol with heroin/pills – this is an incredibly dangerous combination.
- If drinking or taking pills with heroin, do the heroin first to better gauge how high you are – alcohol and especially benzos impair judgment so you may not remember or care how much you've used.
- Have a friend with you who knows what drugs you've taken and can respond in case of an emergency

Tolerance:

- Use less after any period of abstinence or decreased use – even a few days away can lower your tolerance.
- If you are using after a period of abstinence, be careful and go slow
- Use less when you are sick and your immune system may be weakened.
- Do a tester shot, or go slow to gauge how the shot is hitting you.
- Use a less risky method (i.e. snort instead of inject).
- Be aware of using in new environments, or with new people—this can change how you experience the effects of the drugs and in some cases, increase the risk of overdose

Quality:

- Test the strength of the drug before you do the whole amount.
- Try to buy from the same dealer so you have a better idea of what you're getting.
- Talk to others who have copped from the same dealer.
- Know which pills you're taking and try to learn about variations in similar pills.
- Be careful when switching from one type of opioid pill to another since their strengths and dosage will vary.

Using Alone:

- USE WITH A FRIEND!
- Develop an overdose plan with your friends or partners.
- Leave the door unlocked or slightly ajar whenever possible.
- Call or text someone you trust and have them check on you.
- Some people can sense when they are about to go out. This is rare, but if you are one of the people that can do this, have a loaded syringe or nasal naloxone ready. People have actually given themselves naloxone before!

continued on next page

Overdose Prevention Tips, *continued*

This worksheet is a component of *Guide to Developing and Managing Overdose Prevention and Take-Home Naloxone Projects*, produced by Harm Reduction Coalition. More information at harmreduction.org

This worksheet highlights common overdose risks and provides prevention tips.

We understand that every prevention message might not be applicable or pragmatic in every situation; we hope these tips can provide and messages can be shared and adapted as needed.

More information on each risk factor can be found at harmreduction.org.

Age and Physical Health:

- Stay hydrated! Drink plenty of water or other fluids.
- Eat regularly.
- Get enough sleep and rest when you feel worn down.
- Pharmaceuticals (like opioids and benzos) – especially those with Tylenol® (acetaminophen) in them – are harder for your liver to break down. If you have liver damage, stay away from pharmaceuticals with a lot of acetaminophen in them, like Vicodin and Percocet.
- Carry your inhaler if you have asthma, tell your friends where you keep it and explain what to do if you have trouble breathing.
- Go slow (use less drugs at first) if you've been sick, lost weight, or have been feeling under the weather or weak—this can affect your tolerance.
- Try to find a good, nonjudgmental doctor and get checked out for any health factors that may increase your risk of overdose, like HIV, viral hepatitis, COPD, high or low blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease or other physical issues that could increase your risk for a stroke, seizure, respiratory problems or heart attack.

Mode of Administration of the Substance:

- Be mindful that injecting and smoking can lead to increased risk.
- Consider snorting, especially in cases when you're using alone or may have decreased tolerance.
- If you inject, try and remove the tie after registering and before injecting – this will allow you to better taste your shot and inject less if it feels too strong.
- Be careful when changing modes of administration since you may not be able to handle the same amounts.

Previous Nonfatal Overdose:

- Always use with a friend or around other people.
- Use less at first, especially if you are using a new product.
- Make an overdose plan with friends or drug partners.