

Opioids

Ways to reduce harms



Firstly, a few key things to know about opioids...

- Opioids are highly effective pain medications. However, over time, using opioids can actually increase your sensitivity to pain, making your pain feel worse (this is called 'hyperalgesia').
- Pain medications without codeine (e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen) have been found to be just as effective as low-dose codeine medications. Paracetamol and ibuprofen also work differently in the body, so you can use both at the same time to increase pain relief, rather than relying on using extra opioids.
- Some people use opioids to manage negative emotions like worry, anxiety, sadness and stress. However, over long periods of time, they tend to make these feelings worse.

It's important to know that there is no safe level of non-prescribed opioid use.

The following questions refer to non-prescribed opioid use only.

Would you try any of these strategies below? (or maybe you do them already?)	Yes	Maybe	No
Setting limits on how much you will use each day/week/month?			
Delaying your first opioid use until after you have finished certain jobs/tasks/activities or at a certain time of the day?			
Getting advice from a trusted peer before trying a new substance or batch?			
If using a new batch or type, trying a little bit first and waiting before having more?			
When using, having someone around (or someone you could quickly contact) if you find yourself in trouble who is able to get help in an emergency?			
Eating before using, and eating healthy foods such as fruit, vegetables, soups, smoothies and protein-rich foods like meat and eggs?			
Staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water and limiting your alcohol intake?			
Having regular breaks to allow your body and mind to rest and recover?			
Carrying naloxone and getting training in how to use it (if not already aware)?			
If you have opioids and/or drug equipment at home, storing them safely out of reach of children and pets?			
If injecting, making sure you have your own sterile equipment?			
Staying connected to a supportive network (i.e. people who positively encourage you and do things other than use)?			



WARNING!

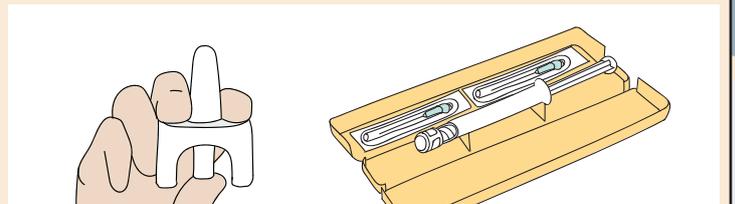
If you take a break from using opioids your tolerance will reduce quickly. This places you at greater risk of overdose. If you choose to use again you will need much less. Use less and go slow.

Naloxone

Naloxone is a free and simple to use medicine that can quickly (although only temporarily) reverse an opioid overdose. Emergency medical treatment is still required.

There are intranasal sprays and injectable forms available.

If you use opioids you should always carry naloxone and show friends and family how to use it in case you experience an overdose.



Scan this QR code to find out where you can get naloxone in your local area

Would you like to organise to get some naloxone now?

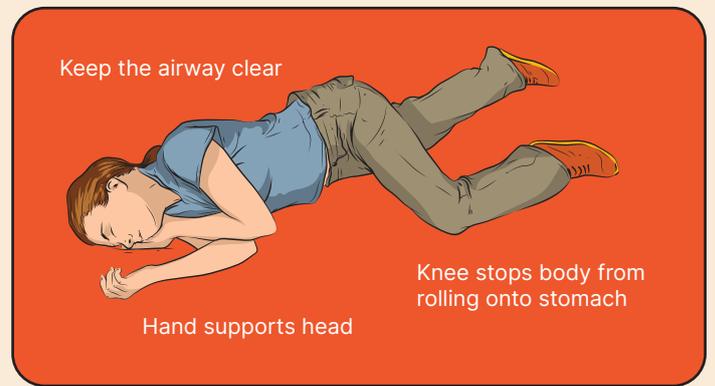
- Yes No

Responding to an opioid overdose

Signs of an opioid overdose include:

- Extreme dizziness
- Cannot be woken up
- Cold or clammy skin
- Blue lips, skin and fingertips
- Slow or no breathing
- Choking, snoring, gurgling
- Vomiting

If this occurs, use naloxone (if you have it) to reverse the overdose and seek assistance immediately by calling triple zero (000) and asking for 'AMBULANCE'. If someone is unconscious and breathing, turn them on their side in the recovery position. If they are not breathing, perform CPR if you are able to and wait with them until help arrives. Don't confuse sleep with loss of consciousness. If someone cannot be woken up, it is likely they are unconscious.



Opioids and driving

Opioids can reduce your ability to drive safely. It's also difficult to know how much your driving skills have been affected or how long opioids remains in your system. Tiredness/fatigue, hangovers or come-downs from drugs can also affect your driving skills.



Do you use regular medications?

Sometimes opioids can affect how these medicines work. Check the medicine packet and/or ask your doctor.



Practice safe sex

Carry and use condoms and access regular STI testing, especially whenever you start having sex with a new partner.

Are you pregnant, breastfeeding or parenting?

Using any substance when planning a pregnancy, pregnant, or while breastfeeding can affect your baby's body and brain development.

Substance use can affect your children and others around you. Ensure your children remain safe and supervised at all times. Make a plan prior to using.

Note: Sleeping with a child in the same bed while under the influence of opioids can be particularly dangerous.

If you are pregnant and use opioids every day, do not suddenly stop using until you have spoken to a medical professional as detoxing may harm your baby. You can also be fast-tracked into opioid treatment.

Opioid dependence treatment medications

If you are using more and more opioids and/or can't cut back or stop without experiencing withdrawal symptoms, there are alternative opioid medications called buprenorphine and methadone that can be prescribed by specialist doctors.

These medications prevent physical withdrawal and help with pain relief without causing you to feel impaired, intoxicated or 'hanging-out'.

Would you like to find out more about opioid treatment medications? Yes No

What would be signs that your opioid use is becoming more of a problem? When would you know it's time to take a break and/or seek help?

