

How to Respond to an Overdose

1 Signs of an Overdose

- Consciousness: won't wake up or respond (rub knuckles on sternum)
- Breathing: slow or shallow breathing; gasping for air while sleeping
- Appearance: pale, clammy, or bluish skin or fingernails
- Pulse/Heart: slowed heartbeat; low blood pressure

2 Call 911 Immediately

- State clearly, "Someone is unresponsive and not breathing due to a suspected overdose"
- Location: Give a clear and accurate address and location details

3 Administer Naloxone (Narcan)

- Administer the naloxone dose per instructions
- Assess response: If the person does not respond after 2-3 minutes, administer a second dose
- Clear the airway: If the person is not breathing, give rescue breaths or CPR
 - With the victim lying flat on their back, put one hand on their chin, tilt their head back, pinch their nose closed, make a seal over their mouth, and breathe 1 breath every 5 seconds. Their chest should rise, not their stomach.
- Positioning: If the person starts breathing on their own but is not fully awake, roll them onto their side (the recovery position) to prevent choking (if they vomit).

4 Provide Support

- Comfort and reassure the person: When they wake up, they may be confused, disoriented, or experience acute withdrawal symptoms (agitation, nausea, vomiting, body aches, etc.). Stay with them, keep them calm, and explain what happened.
- Stay Until Help Arrives: Naloxone's effects last 30-90 minutes. The patient must be monitored because they can go back into an overdose if long-acting opioids were taken (e.g., fentanyl patch, methadone, extended-release formulations of morphine or oxycodone).
- Prevent further drug use: Immediately caution the person against using more opioids, as they are at high risk of another overdose once the naloxone wears off.
- Medical follow-up is essential: Ensure medical evaluation- it is crucial that the person receives professional medical attention as soon as possible for observation and potential linkage to care for opioid use disorder, even if they seem to have recovered completely.



Important Legal Protections in California

Good Samaritan Laws protect individuals from civil liability when they provide emergency medical or non-medical care in good faith at the scene of an emergency.

- Calling 911: Limited immunity from arrest, protects people from arrest and prosecution for low-level drug possession violations if they seek medical help for a drug overdose. This applies to the person experiencing the overdose and any person seeking medical assistance for them.

Additional Resources

- [Further information on available Naloxone Products](#)
- [Prescription and dispensing instructions for injectable naloxone with tear-off patient instructions](#)
- [Prescription and dispensing instructions for nasal naloxone with tear-off patient instructions](#)
- [Videos for Instruction on Naloxone Administration, Overdose Education, Naloxone Conversations](#)

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