

# INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY

AUGUST 31

# FACTSHEET

# OPIOIDS

## WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

Opioids is an umbrella term for natural or synthetic drugs that are derived from – or related to – the opium poppy.

Opioids attach to receptors in the central nervous system (CNS). Opioids reduce pain signals to the brain, therefore they are analgesics (painkillers). Commonly used opioids include oxycodone, morphine, codeine, heroin, fentanyl, methadone and – of course – opium itself.

## SIGNS OF OVERDOSE

Opioids can dull the senses as well as induce relaxation and euphoria. Opioids depress (slow down) breathing and the heart rate.

In high doses, opioids depress the body's natural urge to breathe. When someone is having an overdose they can stop breathing and may die. Even if a person does not die from overdose, they can sustain brain damage.

If you cannot get a response from someone, do not assume they are asleep. Unusual or deep snoring is a common sign of overdose. Do not let people at risk 'sleep it off'.

Signs of overdose can include:

- No response to stimuli
- Shallow / stopped breathing
- Can't be woken up
- Unusual snoring / gurgling sounds
- Blue lips / finger tips
- Floppy arms and legs

## OVERDOSE RESPONSE

Sometimes it can take hours for someone to die from an overdose of opioids. Action taken as soon as possible could save a life. If you think someone has overdosed, knowing how to respond is crucial:

### CHECK FOR VITAL SIGNS

<b>A</b>	Alert	Not responding to voice?
<b>B</b>	Breathing	Noisy? Shallow? Slow? Stopped? Strange snoring? (can signify blocked airway)
<b>C</b>	Colour	For fair-skinned people, blue or pale lips or fingertips? For darker skinned people, grayish or ashen lips and skin colour.

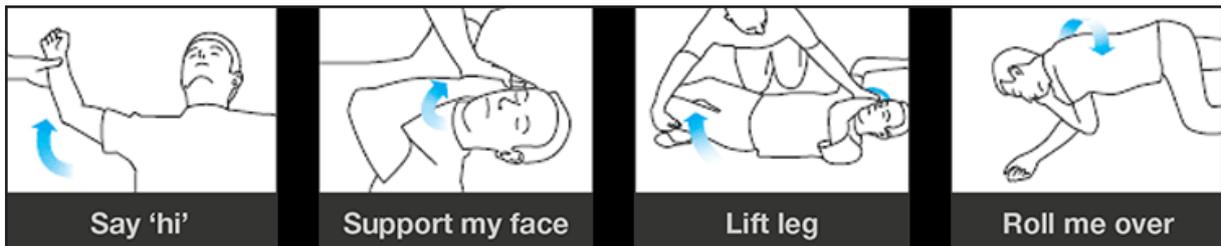
More information and fact sheets can be found at [www.overdoseday.com](http://www.overdoseday.com)

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**IF YOU SEE ANY OF THESE SIGNS** you should immediately move to activate the response plan for opioid overdose.

- Before you act, check for dangers such as needles
- Seek medical attention
- Try to get a response from the person by calling their name and/or giving a sternal rub
- If you can't get a response, put them in the recovery position



Source: <http://www.prenoxadinjection.com/>

## WHAT NOT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A SUSPECTED OVERDOSE:

- Do NOT leave them alone
- Do NOT give the person anything to eat or drink, or try to induce vomiting

## IF YOU HAVE NARCAN/ NALOXONE:

- Assemble the naloxone ready for use and administer the full amount as directed
- Record the time of administration. Provide this information to the emergency medical services when they arrive
- If the person is not breathing, apply rescue breathing
- Administer another dose of naloxone if there has been no response after 3-5 minutes
- Record the time of administration. Provide this information to the emergency medical services when they arrive

## IF YOU DO NOT HAVE NARCAN/ NALOXONE:

- If the person is breathing, leave in recovery position and monitor breathing until emergency medical services arrives
- If person is not breathing apply rescue breathing (1 breath every 5 seconds) and continue until:
  - » The person starts to breathe on their own
  - » Medical attention arrives/is available
  - » Someone else can take over for you

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