

## What to DO if somebody is experiencing poisoning

If somebody is experiencing poisoning, they need help. Without help, they might die. Seconds can count!

- 1. Call 911.**
- 2. Use a naloxone kit if you have one.**  
Follow instructions included in the kit.
- 3. Roll them into recovery position** if they are passed out and breathing. This prevents choking. 
- 4. Breathe for them if they aren't breathing:**
  - Use a barrier mask and follow instructions on the mask.
  - Tilt the head back and pinch their nostrils.
  - Give them a breath every five seconds.
- 5. Stay with them until help comes.** If you can't stay, write down on a piece of paper what drugs the person took, and if they were given naloxone. Leave it with them so they can get the right help.

## What NOT to do if somebody is experiencing poisoning

- **Don't** leave them alone.
- **Don't** put them in a shower or cold bath.
- **Don't** leave them on their back.
- **Don't** hit or hurt them to try to bring them around.
- **Don't** give them other drugs.

**These will all just make things worse.**

### Read...remember...react

When an opioid poisoning happens, it can be easy to panic and forget what to do. Keep your naloxone kit handy. Look it over often. Talk to your friends about staying safe and knowing what to do.

For more information and to find addiction services and support near you, call Health Link at 811 or the Addiction Helpline at 1-866-332-2322 (toll-free in Alberta). Visit [www.drugsafe.ca](http://www.drugsafe.ca).

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# OPIOID POISONING PREVENTION

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**Save a Life**

# Opioid Facts

Poisoning (overdose) can happen when you take enough of a drug or combination of drugs to cause illness or death. Poisoning looks different depending on the drug you take, and is often accidental.

- **Poisoning can happen with small amounts**
- **Often mixed with other drugs or contaminants**
- **Contributes to an average 2 deaths per day in Alberta since 2016**
- **Fentanyl is the most common illegal opioid**
- **Fentanyl is more toxic than other opioids**
- **Fentanyl is falsely sold as other drugs** (e.g., oxycodone, heroin)

**Source:** <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/f4b74c38-88cb-41ed-aa6f-32db93c7c391/resource/1044cc6d-3a29-4f4b-9f96-6264e92e17e0/download/health-alberta-opioid-response-surveillance-report-2019-q4.pdf>

## Tips to prevent poisoning

- **Use with others and take turns!** That way, if there is a problem, you can help each other out.
- **Use in a familiar environment and avoid rushing.** Take time to prepare your own drugs and use in a safe, comfortable environment.
- **Use a test dose** (smaller amounts than usual) to check the strength of your drugs. Do this when starting use and with every new drug, source, or batch.
- **Start using in small amounts** if you haven't used for a while (like being in recovery, hospital, or prison). When starting back again, many people are at risk for poisoning because their tolerance is low.
- **Know the risks of mixing drugs.** You are most likely to experience poisoning if you:
  - use more than one “downer” (depressant) at a time or mix them with alcohol
  - use a “downer” and an “upper” (stimulant), sometimes called a “speedball”

- **Be aware of your health status** and how it can put you at greater risk. Health conditions (like infections or immune disorders) can make it harder for the body to tolerate drugs and increase risk of poisoning.
- **Naloxone** is a medication that reverses the effects of poisoning from opioids. Have a kit and know how to use it.

## Signs of opioid poisoning

A person experiencing opioid poisoning may show one more of the following:

- breathing very slowly or not at all
- unresponsive (can't wake them)
- difficulty walking, talking, or staying awake
- limp body
- pale face
- cold and damp skin
- blue lips or nails
- gurgling or snoring sounds
- choking or throwing up
- narrow (constricted) pupils
- stiff body or seizure-like movement