

Get the Facts: Overdose Prevention

If you use drugs (even just experimentally, occasionally, or recreationally), you are at risk of overdose. Learn how to prevent, recognize, and respond to a drug overdose.

What is an overdose?

An overdose (OD) happens when someone consumes a **toxic amount of a drug** or a combination of drugs, **including alcohol**. Overdoses can be fatal, but they can be reversed or treated if care is provided in time.

Oregon is experiencing an overdose crisis

54%

increase in the number of Oregonians dying from unintentional overdose from 2020–2022

89%

of overdose deaths in Oregon were unintentional or accidental in 2022

90%

of unintentional overdose deaths in Oregon in 2022 were attributed to methamphetamine and/or fentanyl

Reduce your risk

If you use drugs, you are at risk of overdose. Fentanyl has been found in other drugs, including cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. Oregon has also seen an influx of counterfeit pills containing fentanyl that look identical to legitimate prescription medications. You may not know if the drug you're using contain fentanyl.

Use the following strategies to prevent an accidental overdose:

- 1** Assume that any pill, powder, or other drug you get from anyone other than your doctor or pharmacist **contains other drugs**, including fentanyl.
- 2** When using drugs, **start low and go slow** — start with a low dose and only increase gradually to check the strength and effects of the drug.
- 3** Avoid mixing multiple drugs at once, including alcohol.
- 4** **Never use alone.** Use with a trusted person who is alert and can respond in the event of an overdose. Call the Never Use Alone hotline at **800-484-3731** or use the [Brave App](#).
- 5** **Always carry naloxone with you.** When using drugs, have it where it can be seen in case of an overdose.
- 6** **Test all the drugs you are planning to use with drug testing strips.** Testing strips are a valuable harm reduction tool but may not be 100% accurate. Assume any illicit substance contains fentanyl. Find drug testing strips and safe syringes at [nasen.org](https://www.nasen.org) or via **211**.
- 7** **Talk to your loved ones** about your drug use and drug use plans. Prevention can start with a conversation.



Recognize the symptoms

Signs of an overdose can look different based on the drugs involved. If you aren't sure, treat the situation like an opioid overdose and give naloxone. **It could save a life.**

Stimulants

Toxic amounts of drugs like **methamphetamine, cocaine and ecstasy** can cause:

- Racing heart rate
- High body temperature, sweating, chills
- Fast breathing
- Nausea, vomiting
- Chest pain
- Muscle spasms and/or unable to move
- Extreme anxiety, panic
- Paranoia and hallucinations
- Lack of consciousness and can't be woken up

Remember: Oregon's Good Samaritan law **protects** the caller and the person who has overdosed from being criminally charged.

Opioids

Toxic amounts of drugs like **oxycodone, fentanyl and heroin** can cause:

- Very slow breathing, with little to no chest movements
- Snoring or gurgling sounds
- Blue or grayish lips/inside of mouth
- Cold or clammy skin
- Lack of consciousness, inability to wake up

Respond and help save a life

Stimulants

- Call 911.

If the person is **conscious**

- Ask if they would like your help
- Help them lie down, elevate legs, and help them drink fluids
- Cool them down (e.g. ice pack, fan).

If the person is **unconscious**

- Help them into the recovery position — lying down on their side with their head supported.
- Stay with them until help arrives.



Opioids *or* you're not sure

- Check for response (shout, "are you ok?"; grind knuckles into chest bone; check for breathing).
- Call 911.
- Give one dose of naloxone.
 1. Place tip of nasal spray in nostril until fingers touch the bottom of their nose.
 2. Press plunger firmly to give dose.
 3. Check for breathing.

Naloxone will not harm someone who is not experiencing an opioid overdose.

- If the person is not breathing, **it is critical** to start rescue breathing.
- If not breathing within three minutes, give another dose of naloxone.
- Help them into the recovery position.
- Stay with them until help arrives. Tell the first responders that naloxone has been given.

If you or someone you know is in a crisis, help is available. Call or text **988** or chat online at 988lifeline.org.

To access prevention tools

- Get **naloxone** over-the-counter at most pharmacies in Oregon.
- Visit the [Behavioral Health Resource Network Dashboard](https://behavioralhealthresource.org) or recovery-networkoforegon.org to find local resources.

To learn more

- Visit reverseoverdose.org.
- Check out OHA's [harm reduction webpage](https://harmreductionwebpage.org).

