

HOW CAN THE RISKS BE MINIMISED?

Being in drug treatment reduces a person's risk of overdose. To access treatment, contact Nottingham Recovery Network on 0800 066 5362. 73 Hounds Gate, Nottingham. NG1 6BB. www.nottinghamrecoverynetwork.com

Try to avoid the risk factors mentioned overleaf as far as possible. If you think you may struggle with any of these it may be helpful to discuss coping strategies at Nottingham Recovery Network. There are lots of different ways that the service can support you.

If you suspect someone has overdosed, call an ambulance immediately.

Carry Naloxone with you whenever there is a chance of you using or going to places where using is occurring. Or if you're drug free you can keep it in the medicine cabinet as a precaution and tell someone you have it and where it is. You can get Naloxone from The Health Shop or Nottingham Recovery Network.

Keep drugs and drug use far away from children. If you think a child has swallowed a drug or medicine, call an ambulance immediately, even if your child appears well as they may become very unwell later. Safe storage boxes are available from The Health Shop or Nottingham Recovery Network.

THE RECOVERY POSITION



With the person lying on their back, kneel on the floor at their side. Extend the arm nearest you at a right angle to their body with their palm facing up.



Take their other arm and fold it so the back of their hand rests on the cheek closest to you, and hold it in place.



Use your free hand to bend the person's knee farthest from you to a right angle. Carefully roll the person onto their side by pulling on the bent knee.



Their bent arm should be supporting the head, and their extended arm will stop you rolling them too far. Open their airway by tilting their head back and lifting their chin, check nothing is blocking their airway.

REDUCE
THE RISK

OF
GOING
OVER

 **THE HEALTH SHOP**
and NRN Harm Reduction Service

12 BROAD STREET, | TEL: 0115 905 5001
NOTTINGHAM NG1 3AL | Email: healthshop@notts hc.nhs.uk

Harm reduction
information for
people who use drugs



 **THE HEALTH SHOP**

THERE ARE MANY FACTORS WHICH COULD MAKE SOMEONE MORE LIKELY TO OVERDOSE

- Mixing different types of drugs. Some combinations are riskier than others, eg using two or more depressant drugs.
- A change in tolerance (e.g. when starting/ finishing treatment, when leaving prison). If you have had a break of around 3 days or more you are at increased risk.
- Injecting. You are less likely to overdose if you smoke the drug. Smoking a bit of the drug before a hit will give you an indication of how strong the drug is.
- Strength of gear/contamination/bash. This can vary enormously.
- Age. The average age of those overdosing is rising (currently 39.5 years old).
- Length of injecting career. Risk appears to increase the longer a person injects.
- Peer Pressure and injecting. The less you are in control of (how much and how) the more risky the hit.
- Using in an unknown environment/with unknown people. Your friends are more likely to stick around and help you in case of emergency. Your adrenaline also increases when you're in an unfamiliar environment which may also put you at higher risk.
- Using after having Naloxone administered. Once the Naloxone has worn off (after about 20 minutes) it is possible to go back into overdose if there is sufficient of the drug left in your body. It is important to wait for an ambulance to come.
- Using alone. If you get into difficulties there is no one to help/call for help.
- Around difficult life events or anniversaries. The combination of increased risk and change in attitude increases risk.
- Domestic violence. A person may be using more to cope with the situation or drugs may be used as a mechanism of control.
- Low mood. Opiate users have higher suicide rates than the rest of the population. It can be difficult to make a first step but talking about it often helps.

DANGEROUS DRUG COMBINATIONS

The most dangerous combination is two or more depressant drugs, e.g. heroin and other opiates/opioids e.g. codeine, co-codamol, tramadol, dihydrocodeine (DF118s), fentanyl /car fentanyl, methadone and buprenorphine (subutex). Also very commonly used depressant drugs are alcohol, benzos and GHB/GBL. The reason why this combination is so dangerous is that it slows breathing down until it eventually stops and causes the heart to stop.

Other drugs to treat with caution are Pregabalin and Gabapentin. They are thought to lower the person's tolerance to opioid drugs and increase risk of overdose particularly if taken with alcohol. They also stay in the body longer than some other drugs so you can forget how much you've taken.

Cocaine and alcohol. When taken together they produce a third chemical called cocaethylene which puts extra pressure on the cardiovascular system leading to an increased risk of damage to the heart.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF OVERDOSE

Depressant Drugs

- Slow breathing which may become noisy like snoring
- Change in skin colour (paler)
- Blue tinge to the lips, skin and nails. In darker-skinned people the blue tinge may be easier to spot in the inside of the lips, gums and around the eyes
- Pinpoint pupils/eyes rolling
- Difficult to rouse
- Unconscious
- Slurred speech
- Unresponsive

Stimulant Drugs

- Shortness of breath/rapid breathing
- Sweating
- High temperature
- Flushed/red skin
- Pain in one or more of these: chest, shoulders, arms, back, jaw and teeth
- Vomiting
- Fainting and light-headedness