

## ALCOHOL

31 AUGUST

INTERNATIONAL  
OVERDOSE  
AWARENESS DAY

## WHAT IS ALCOHOL?

Alcohol is a legal depressant that slows down the messages travelling between the brain and the body. In small amounts, alcohol can cause you to feel relaxed, more confident and heighten your emotions.

Alcohol depresses the nerves that control involuntary actions such as breathing and the gag reflex (to prevent choking). A fatal dose of alcohol will eventually cause these functions to shut down. Since alcohol is an irritant to the stomach, excessive vomiting is also common. If the person is unconscious, this could lead to death by asphyxiation.

## SIGNS OF OVERDOSE

- Confusion
- Loss of co-ordination
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Irregular breathing (a gap of more than 10 seconds between breaths)
- Slow breathing (less than eight breaths per minute)
- Pale or blue tinged skin
- Low body temperature (hypothermia)
- Unconsciousness or passing out

## OVERDOSE RESPONSE

**Call an ambulance**, tell the operator your location, and stay on the line.

**Keep them warm.**

**If you can't get a response** or the person is unconscious, put them in the recovery position. Don't leave them on their back.

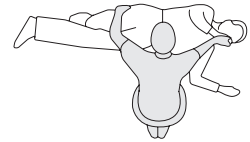
**If they are awake**, try to keep them in a sitting position and awake.

**Be prepared to give CPR** if they stop breathing before an ambulance arrives.

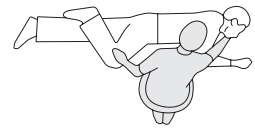
**If muscle spasms or seizures occur**, remove anything from the immediate environment that might cause injury.

## The Recovery Position

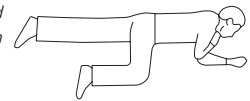
**Support face** Place the arm nearest to you at right angles to the body. Place their other hand against their cheek.



**Lift Leg** Get hold of the far leg just above the knee and pull it up, keeping the foot flat on the ground.



**Roll over** Keep their hand pressed against their cheek and pull on the upper leg to roll them towards you and onto their side.



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

- **Do NOT leave them to sleep it off:** the amount of alcohol in someone's blood continues to rise even when they stop drinking.
- **Do NOT give them coffee:** alcohol and coffee both dehydrates the body. Having both can lead to severe dehydration and permanent brain damage.
- **Do NOT make them sick:** alcohol can interfere with a person's gag reflex, causing them to choke on their own vomit.
- **Do NOT walk them around:** alcohol slows brain function and affects co-ordination and balance. Walking them around might cause accidents.
- **Do NOT put them in a cold shower:** it could dangerously reduce body temperature and lead to hypothermia.
- **Do NOT let them drink more alcohol:** the amount of alcohol in their bloodstream could become even higher – which could put them in further danger.

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# CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE

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## WHAT IS CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE?

**Methamphetamine (or methylamphetamine hydrochloride) is a central nervous system (CNS) stimulant.**

It is generally available in four forms:

- 1 Speed** – which comes in powder form and is typically of low purity.
- 2 Base** – a damp oily substance with white to yellow or brown colour (also known as “pure”, “paste”, “wax”).
- 3 Pills/tablets** – usually contain only a small dose of methamphetamine.
- 4 Crystal** – purest form of methamphetamine and has a translucent to white crystalline appearance. The crystal form of the drug is also known as ice.

Meth can be swallowed, snorted, smoked or injected, with each of these methods having different risks. For example, swallowing makes it difficult to work out the dose and when its effects will be felt. Smoking is harsh on the lungs and risks burning them. Injecting any drug attracts risks of injection-related injury and diseases including blood borne viruses (e.g. HIV, hepatitis C).

Smoking and injecting ice can have a nearly instantaneous onset of its effects which might account for the higher likelihood of methamphetamine dependence among people who smoke and/or inject ice.

## SIGNS OF OVERDOSE

Because of its high purity, meth overdose, or toxicity, can occur even with small doses, especially when mixed with other drugs. The greatest concern in meth overdose is the risk of seizures, stroke and heart attack. Emergency presentations featuring meth toxicity are less common than meth psychosis. However, risks to the cardiovascular system from high levels are significant, especially when there is a pre-existing health problem.

Some signs of overdose can include:

### Physical signs

- Hot, flushed, sweaty skin
- Severe headaches
- Chest pain
- Unsteady walking
- Rigid muscles or tremors, spasms, jerky movements
- Movement of the limbs, and seizures
- Difficulty breathing

### Psychological signs

- Psychotic symptoms in individuals with no prior mental illness
- Severe agitation or panic
- Altered mental state (e.g. confusion, disorientation)

## OVERDOSE RESPONSE

**Before you act**, check for dangers such as needles.

**Call an ambulance**, tell the operator your location, and stay on the line.

**Move the person to a quiet**, safe room away from bystanders, noise, excessive light, heat and other stimulation.

**If confused or panicking**, try to reassure them.

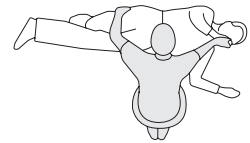
**If overheating**, try to cool them down by loosening outer clothing or putting a wet towel on the back of the neck or under their arms.

**If you can't get a response** or the person is unconscious, put them in the recovery position.

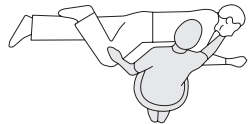
**If muscle spasms or seizures occur**, remove anything from the immediate environment that might cause injury.

### The Recovery Position

**Support face** Place the arm nearest to you at right angles to the body. Place their other hand against their cheek.



**Lift Leg** Get hold of the far leg just above the knee and pull it up, keeping the foot flat on the ground.



**Roll over** Keep their hand pressed against their cheek and pull on the upper leg to roll them towards you and onto their side.



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

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

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# DEPRESSANTS

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## WHAT ARE DEPRESSANTS?

**Benzodiazepines, barbiturates (medical depressants), and alcohol all slow the central nervous system to produce a calming effect.**

These substances are often prescribed to relieve pain, help you sleep or in the case of alcohol, used recreationally when socialising. However, when taken in excessive amounts or in combinations with other drugs, depressants can depress normal functions such as breathing and heart rate until they eventually stop, resulting in brain damage or death.

## SIGNS OF OVERDOSE

- Vomiting
- Unresponsive, but awake
- Limp body
- Pale and/or clammy face
- Blue fingernails or lips
- Shallow or erratic breathing, or not breathing at all
- Slow or erratic pulse (heartbeat)
- Choking or sounds of a gurgling noise
- Loss of consciousness

## OVERDOSE RESPONSE

**Call an ambulance**, tell the operator your location, and stay on the line.

**Be prepared to give CPR** if they stop breathing before an ambulance arrives.

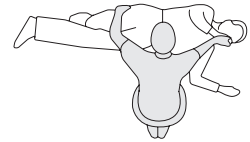
**Ensure the person has adequate air** by keeping crowds back or opening windows. Loosen tight clothing.

**If the person is unconscious** or wants to lie down, put them in the recovery position and continue to monitor them.

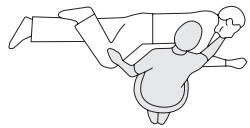
**Provide paramedics with as much information as possible**, such as what, and how much of the drug was taken, how long ago and any pre-existing medical conditions. If the drug came in a bottle or packet, give the packaging to the ambulance officers.

## The Recovery Position

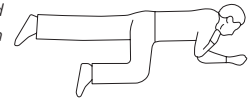
**Support face** Place the arm nearest to you at right angles to the body. Place their other hand against their cheek.



**Lift Leg** Get hold of the far leg just above the knee and pull it up, keeping the foot flat on the ground.



**Roll over** Keep their hand pressed against their cheek and pull on the upper leg to roll them towards you and onto their side.



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

- Do **NOT** ignore snoring or gurgling: This could mean someone is having trouble breathing.
- Do **NOT** leave the person alone.
- Do **NOT** give the person anything to eat or drink, or try to induce vomiting.

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# NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

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## WHAT ARE NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES?

**New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), also known as 'synthetic drugs' or 'legal highs' are chemicals that are made to act in a similar way to drugs like cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine or methamphetamine.**

They come in different forms including:

- Powders / pills.
- Synthetic cannabis (synthetic chemicals that have been added to herbal or plant material).

Although called 'new' some have been around for decades and are often sold as incense, bath salts, plant food or wrongly marketed as safer or legal alternatives to other drugs.

## MISCONCEPTION ABOUT THEIR LEGAL STATUS

In attempts to stay ahead of, or get around the law, manufacturers have changed the molecular structure of NPS. NPS have been changed so often and new substances made that it is practically impossible to know what is in what you are taking.

Laws regarding NPS may be different depending on where you are in the world but even NPS bought from regulated licenced sources can be dangerous. Buying them from the internet or from unregulated sources can be very risky as even if it has 'legal' on the packet there is no guarantee what's in the packet is legal or safe.

For example, two products, each sold as synthetic cannabis may be completely different chemicals from each other and have nothing in common with cannabis or even the ingredients written on the packets.

NPS have been linked to deaths in the United Kingdom, Europe, America and Australia.

## SIGNS OF OVERDOSE

The effects of NPS vary from substance to substance and so may signs of overdose.

Some signs of overdose can include:

### Physical signs

- Rigid muscles / spasms
- Shaking / shivering
- Fever / overheating
- Nausea or vomiting
- Difficulty / stopped breathing
- Can't be woken up
- Seizure

### Psychological signs

- Confusion or distress
- Paranoia, fear and panic
- Agitation and aggression

## OVERDOSE RESPONSE

If you think someone has overdosed, please consider the following:

**Before you act**, check for dangers such as needles.

**Call an ambulance**, tell the operator your location, and stay on the line.

**If confused or panicking**, try to reassure them.

**Maintain calmness** in the area.

**If overheating**, try to cool them down by loosening outer clothing or putting a wet towel on the back of the neck or under their arms.

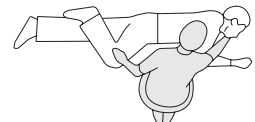
**If you can't get a response**, put them in the recovery position.

### The Recovery Position

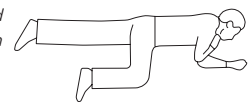
**Support face** Place the arm nearest to you at right angles to the body. Place their other hand against their cheek.



**Lift Leg** Get hold of the far leg just above the knee and pull it up, keeping the foot flat on the ground.



**Roll over** Keep their hand pressed against their cheek and pull on the upper leg to roll them towards you and onto their side.



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

- Do **NOT** leave the person alone.
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# OPIOIDS

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## 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, reducing pain signals to the brain. Commonly used opioids include oxycodone, morphine, codeine, heroin, fentanyl, methadone and opium.

## SIGNS OF OVERDOSE

Opioids dull the senses, induce relaxation and euphoria. They 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.

### Signs of overdose can include:

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

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'.

## OVERDOSE RESPONSE

Sometimes it can take hours for someone to die from an opioid overdose. 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:

- A Alert:** Not responding to voice?  
**B Breathing:** Noisy? Shallow? Slow? Stopped? Strange snoring?  
**C Colour:** For fair-skinned people, blue or pale lips or fingertips?  
 For darker skinned people, grayish or ashen lips and skin colour.

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.

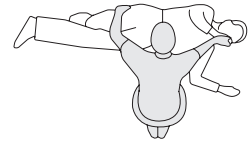
**Call an ambulance**, tell the operator your location, and stay on the line.

**Try to get a response** from the person by calling their name and/or giving a sternal rub (rub your knuckles firmly across their sternum).

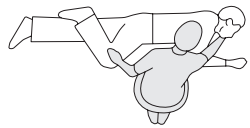
**If you can't get a response**, put them in the recovery position allowing their airways to remain open.

### The Recovery Position

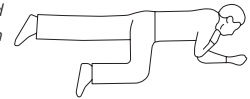
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**Lift Leg** Get hold of the far leg just above the knee and pull it up, keeping the foot flat on the ground.



**Roll over** Keep their hand pressed against their cheek and pull on the upper leg to roll them towards you and onto their side.



### If you HAVE nalcant/naloxone:

1. Assemble the naloxone ready for use and inject the full amount into the outer thigh or upper arm (or use nasal spray).
2. Record the time of administration. Provide this information to paramedics when they arrive.
3. If the person is not breathing, apply rescue breathing (2 breathes every 5 seconds).
4. If there has been no response after 3-5 minutes, give another dose of naloxone. Remember to record the time of administration.

Note: Naloxone will only temporarily reverse an overdose.

### If you DO NOT HAVE nalcant/naloxone:

- If the person is breathing, leave in recovery position and monitor breathing.
- If person is not breathing apply rescue breathing and continue until:
  - The person starts to breathe on their own
  - Ambulance arrives
    - Someone else can take over for you.

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

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# STIMULANTS

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## WHAT ARE STIMULANTS?

Stimulants are a category of drug that increase alertness and heart rate, producing an effect of increased confidence, and energy.

Large doses of these drugs can result in anxiety, panic, seizures, headaches, stomach cramps, aggression and paranoia.

Examples of stimulant drugs include: amphetamines, cocaine and Ecstasy (MDMA).

## SIGNS OF OVERDOSE

### Physical signs

- Hot, flushed or sweaty skin
- Headaches
- Chest pain
- Unsteadiness
- Rigid muscles, tremors or spasms
- Uncontrolled movements or seizures
- Difficulty breathing

### Psychological signs

- Psychotic symptoms in individuals with no prior mental illness
- Severe agitation or panic
- Altered mental state, such as confusion or disorientation

## OVERDOSE RESPONSE

**Before you act**, check for danger

**Call an ambulance**, tell the operator your location, and stay on the line.

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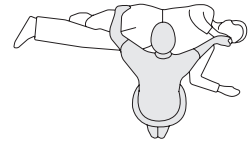
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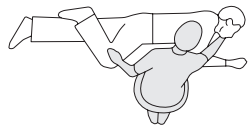
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## The Recovery Position

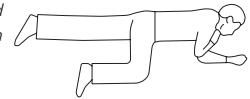
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