

Opioids



WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

Opioids are natural or synthetic drugs working on opioid receptors. Opioids attach to receptors in the central nervous system, reducing pain signals to the brain. Commonly used opioids include morphine, heroin, methadone, fentanyl, oxycodone, codeine, buprenorphine and opium.

SIGNS OF HAVING TOO MUCH (OVERDOSE)

- Drowsiness/somnolence
- Unresponsiveness
- None or abnormal breathing (ie. snoring or gurgling)
- Pale skin
- Blue/grey lips or finger tips

HOW TO RESPOND

1. Check for dangers to own safety
2. Check for awareness
3. Check for breathing
4. Call 1-1-2
5. Provide first aid/CPR if none or abnormal breathing
6. Use the antidote Naloxone if available
7. Stay until emergency response arrives

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Illustration by Matilde Digmann

Depressants



WHAT ARE DEPRESSANTS?

Depressants are medical drugs often prescribed to relieve pain, help you sleep or remove anxiety. When taken in excessive amounts or in combination with other drugs, depressants can suppress normal functions such as breathing and heart rate until they eventually stop. Commonly used depressants include benzodiazepines, opioids and barbiturates.

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Stimulants



WHAT ARE STIMULANTS?

Stimulants are drugs that increase alertness, 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 HAVING TOO MUCH (OVERDOSE)

- Hot, flushed or sweaty skin
- Unsteadiness
- Rigid muscles, tremors or spasms
- Uncontrolled movements or seizures
- Difficulty breathing
- Psychotic symptoms
- Severe agitation or panic
- Altered mental state, such as confusion or disorientation

HOW TO RESPOND

1. Check for dangers to own safety
2. Check for awareness
3. Check for breathing
4. Call 1-1-2
5. Provide first aid/CPR if none or abnormal breathing
6. Reassure the person and make sure they are comfortable
7. If overheating, cool the person down
8. Put person into recovery position
9. Stay until emergency response arrives

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Alcohol



WHAT IS ALCOHOL?

Alcohol is a legal depressant that slows down the messages traveling within the brain and between the brain and the body. In small amounts, alcohol can cause you to feel relaxed and more confident and heighten your emotions. Alcohol depresses the breathing and the gag reflex (which would normally prevent choking). An excess amount of alcohol may eventually cause these functions to shut down.

SIGNS OF HAVING TOO MUCH (OVERDOSE)

- Low responsiveness/Drowsiness/Confusion
- Loss of consciousness/passing out
- None or abnormal breathing
- Vomiting
- Pale or blue skin
- Low body temperature

HOW TO RESPOND

1. Check for dangers to own safety
2. Check for awareness
3. Check for breathing
4. Call 1-1-2
5. Provide first aid/CPR if none or abnormal breathing
6. Keep them warm
7. If they are unconscious but are breathing normally, put them in the recovery position—Don't leave them on their back
8. If they are awake, keep them awake and in a sitting position
9. Stay until emergency response arrives

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Cannabis



WHAT IS CANNABIS?

Cannabis is a mixture of dried flowers from the Cannabis sativa + indica plants. It is most often smoked but can be used to brew tea, mixed into foods or vaporized. The main psychoactive chemical in marijuana, is delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which is found in resin produced by leaves and buds from the female cannabis plant (primarily.) Cannabis contains over 500 other chemicals, including more than 100 compounds that are related to THC. THC can cause euphoria, feelings of well-being, relaxation and stress reduction.

SIGNS OF HAVING TOO MUCH

- Rapid heart rate and high blood pressure which can cause headaches
- Mental confusion and impaired judgment which can lead to injuries
- Hallucinations
- Extreme paranoia
- Extreme anxiety or panic attacks
- Uncontrollable shaking or seizures
- Pale skin
- Unresponsiveness

HOW TO RESPOND

1. Check for dangers to own safety
2. Check for awareness
3. Check for breathing
4. Call 1-1-2
5. Provide first aid/CPR if none or abnormal breathing
6. Find a safe place to rest for a few hours if emergency services are not needed
7. Keep them hydrated
8. Don't let them ingest any more marijuana, alcohol, or other drugs
9. Stay with them

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Illustration by Erik Pontoppidan