



# Take Steps to Lower Your Overdose Risk

**Your life matters! Plan ahead.** Anyone who uses drugs can overdose.

## Know the facts

- Fentanyl is 50-100x stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine
- Fentanyl is found mixed into heroin, cocaine, pills, and crystal meth
- Even a small amount of fentanyl can cause an overdose

## Signs of an overdose



- Small, pinpoint pupils
- Falling asleep or losing consciousness
- Slow, weak, or no breathing
- Choking or gurgling sounds
- Limp body
- Cold, clammy skin
- Discolored lips, nails, and/or skin

## Your tolerance changes

- Your tolerance drops even after a 1-2 day break or detoxing
- Using the usual amount of a drug even after a short break puts you at an increased risk for overdose
- Mixing alcohol, drugs, and prescription medications (including benzos) raises your risk of overdose

## Carry naloxone (Narcan)

- Naloxone will reverse an opioid overdose. Have it out and ready when you use.
- Make sure your friends and family know how to use naloxone and keep someone alive by breathing for them
- [Learn where you can find naloxone](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/where-to-get-naloxone-in-massachusetts) at [mass.gov/info-details/where-to-get-naloxone-in-massachusetts](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/where-to-get-naloxone-in-massachusetts).
- Pay for naloxone with your MassHealth or private insurance at a local pharmacy



## Find a buddy

- Make sure someone knows where you are
- Take turns using so your buddy can give you naloxone if needed
- If you alone, use a "virtual spotter" to keep tabs on you by phone
- Before using, ask your friends to text or call you 3-5 minutes after you use to check in

## Call a spotter



If you use drugs alone, call SafeSpot, use the substance, and keep the line open with the operator until it is safe to disconnect. If you have an emergency, the operator will call the responder you chose or emergency response services. [Connect with SafeSpot on their website \(safe-spot.me\)](https://www.safe-spot.me) or by calling 800-972-0590.

## Talk to someone

- Overdosing or witnessing an overdose can be overwhelming
- Talk to someone about your feelings
- The National Suicide Prevention Hotline (988) supports and talk to people in distress and crisis
- [Learn more about finding support after a death by overdose \(sadod.org\)](https://www.sadod.org)

## Examine your drugs

- Keep an eye out for changes in the color and flavor of your drug and how it dissolves
- Be extra cautious if you get your drugs from a new supplier
- Start slowly with a test shot to find out the potency of your drugs
- Take one drug at a time, go slow, and use less
- Test your drugs for fentanyl with a test strip. Get one at a Syringe Service Program (SSP).

## Locate a safe place

- Try to find a place:
  - Where you can get your drugs ready slowly and carefully
  - That's well-lit and has clean water
  - Where you'll be found quickly if something goes wrong
- Don't lock the door or sit in front of it
- If you can, leave the door open

## Care for yourself

- Clean your injection site before using
- Use a new needle and don't share it with others to prevent the spread of diseases like HIV and Hepatitis
- Exchange your needles for new ones at a Syringe Service Program (SSP)
- Keep your gear separate from others so it doesn't get mixed up

## Manage your use

- Medications like buprenorphine (Suboxone) and methadone manage cravings and withdrawal symptoms
- Engaging in treatment may lower the risk of an overdose
- Understanding how these medications impact the effects of other substances is important

## Valuable resources

- [Find harm reduction, treatment, and recovery resources at the Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline \(helplinema.org\)](https://www.helplinema.org), or call 800-327-5050
- [Get trained on naloxone use and rescue breathing \(youcan.info\)](https://www.youcan.info)
- [Find naloxone, needles, testing resources, and fentanyl test strips at a Harm Reduction Program near you \(mass.gov/info-details/harm-reduction-program-locator\)](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/harm-reduction-program-locator)
- [Find emotional support and resources at the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline \(988lifeline.org\)](https://www.988lifeline.org). You can also call or text 988 from your phone.