

How to Reverse An Overdose

In 2021, 107,622 people in the United States died as the result of overdose. That's **nearly 300 overdose deaths every day**. Knowing how to recognize and reverse an overdose is critical because quick action is important when someone goes into an overdose.

Overdose reversal may seem scary but the process itself is not difficult or complicated, and knowing how to save a life before a situation arises will make it much easier to handle should you ever need to.

STEP 1: Assess the Scene, Evaluate the Person

Start with a quick look around the area to ensure it is safe for you to proceed. Next, do a visual inspection of the person, looking for any obvious physical hindrances, open wounds, or other indicators of substance use or trauma.

- Do you see drug paraphernalia?
Are their arms, hands, legs, or feet bound or otherwise restricted?
- Is there anything covering their face or mouth?
- Is there anything around their neck that might restrict their airway or blood flow to the brain?

Next, look for signs of overdose:

- Not breathing
 - Chest not moving
 - No airflow from nostrils
- Not responsive
- Skin color is bluish (light skin) or grayish (dark skin)
- Pupils constricted (pinpoint)
- Gurgling sound (aka the “death rattle”)

STEP 2: Stabilize and Prepare

- Shake them by the shoulders and yell “Are you ok? Do you need help?”
If no response,
- Move the person to the floor or other flat, hard surface (not on a bed or sofa) on their back.
- Make a fist and rub your knuckles hard up and down the sternum (pain response).
If no response,
- With a gloved hand or a clean cloth, look and sweep the inside of the mouth for foreign objects.
 - food
 - Fentanyl patches
 - syringe caps
 - undissolved pills

STEP 3: Administer Naloxone

- **Narcan** (*nasal spray*)
Remove the Narcan from its packaging. Stick the device all the way up the nostril and press the plunger and hold for a second or two. The medication will absorb through the sinuses.
- **Evzio** (*autoinjector, discontinued but still in use*)
Remove the cap from the autoinjector and press it firmly against the muscular part of the thigh. It is ok to do it through clothes if necessary. Depress the plunger and hold in place for 5 seconds.
- **Injectable Naloxone** (*needle and vial*)
Draw up the entire vial into the syringe. Don't worry about air bubbles. Inject into the muscular part of the thigh.

STEP 4: Call 911

- If someone else is with you, have them call 911. If not, **call 911 on speaker** after administering the first dose of Narcan. Tell 911 operator:
 - Someone is unconscious, unresponsive, and not breathing
 - You have administered 1 dose of Narcan
 - Exact details of your location (*include address and info such as "upstairs, 1st room on left"*)
 - Physical description of the person in distress

STEP 5: Administer CPR if trained

If you are trained and comfortable administering CPR, do so. If not, continue to stimulate and talk to the person, shaking their shoulders periodically until EMS arrives.

STEP 6: Administer 2nd dose

If you have multiple doses of naloxone on hand, you can safely administer a second dose after 2 minutes, and continue to administer doses as needed until the person is resuscitated or until EMS arrives.

When they regain consciousness...

The person may awaken and be confused, even angry. Administering naloxone takes away their high, so you've essentially sent them into rapid withdrawal and that doesn't feel good. Some people will want to get up and leave, but it is very important that you try to keep them calm until medical help arrives.

Depending on the amount of opioid in their system, they could go back into overdose as the naloxone wears off. For this reason, it is critical that they are monitored closely for no less than two hours after an overdose reversal, as the effects of naloxone will begin to wear off after 90 minutes.