



HARM REDUCTION STRATEGIES FOR PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

The Bottom Line

Harm reduction strategies should be put in place to better protect people who use drugs during times of increased isolation and decreased access to services.

Strategy 1: Only Have What You Need

- Prepare and store the drug of choice and safe supplies (needles, waters, pipes etc.).
- Knowing about/ who carries methadone. Stock up on medications that help with withdrawal symptoms (Pepto Bismol, Ibuprofen, Imodium) rather than stockpiling harmful or illegal substances.
- Consider having substances stored that may help with coping should you run out of the drug of choice (e.g. Cannabis).
- Avoid panic stockpiling to reduce the risk of overdose, possession charges, and theft from others.

Strategy 2: Practice Safer Drug Use

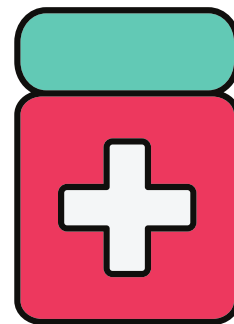
- Ensure hands are washed and all supplies are sanitized before using drugs.
- Do not share drugs or let others prepare your drugs for you.
- Start slow. Participate in a test dose if the drugs are from a new source or if you are alone with no emergency overdose plan. Plan for an overdose by carrying Naloxone.
- Be especially wary of using street drugs. The reliability of these substances has decreased even more so. This has resulted in alarmingly high death tolls from drug overdoses.
- Know the signs and symptoms of substance poisoning/overdose. Always call 911 for direction and support, even if Naloxone has been administered or the individual appears to be recovering.

Strategy 3: Understanding Social Safety

- Pick a few friends and family who are supportive and protective.
- Take care of your physical health as much as possible. Try not to share drugs or paraphernalia.
- Due to the difficulties in sometimes accessing services, try to use new substances from a new source with someone you trust in case of an overdose. In some places, limited, safe consumption sites are available for supervised drug use and for seeking support.
- If you prefer to use alone, ask someone to check on you or use while on the phone with a trusted person able to call for assistance in the event of an overdose.

Strategy 4: Responding to an Overdose

- Try to rouse the person to bring them to a state of consciousness. Encourage them to take big breaths. Call 911 if there is no response.
- Check for airway obstruction by tilting their head back and maneuvering their lower jaw to open their mouth.
- Anyone not responding to the overdose should leave the area.
- If rescue breaths need to be provided, you can do so while wearing a face mask or gently placing a thin piece of cloth or towel over the individual's mouth and nose before administering if you do not feel comfortable.
- If chest compressions are needed, the same process of gently covering the individual's mouth and nose can be utilized.
- Administer naloxone. Give 2 doses, if necessary.
- Continuously check for breathing during the revival process. If the individual is still not breathing, repeat the steps until help arrives to ensure oxygen is still getting to their brain.



For original sources and documents, please visit: www.childtraumaresearch.ca