

STAYING ALIVE

AFTER

A BREAK

**low tolerance,
high risk**

the good news

You've got heroin out of your system – and maybe out of your life.

the bad news

Your tolerance is low. So a hit that wouldn't have touched you before, could be dangerous now.

the other good news

There's a lot you can do to stay safe. This leaflet tells you how.

TOLERANCE: it's tricky

GETTING IT

Your body slowly learns to cope with opiates (like heroin and methadone) and builds up a tolerance. This explains why, over time, you need more and more gear to get the same hit.

LOSING IT

But tolerance drops really quickly. After about a week of not using, your tolerance will be closer to the level it was at when you first started using gear. This makes it much easier to overdose on a small amount.

reduce your risk

option 1

Stay clean.

Easier said than done.

But definitely worth a mention.

If you slip, see it as a reason to try harder. Not as a reason to do more drugs.

option 2

Don't inject.

Smoking or chasing is a lot safer.

People who inject heroin are 14 times more likely to have a fatal overdose than people who smoke it.

option 3

Don't mix your drugs.

Avoid downers or alcohol if you're doing heroin or methadone.

Most people who overdose on injected heroin have downers or alcohol in their system.

option 4

Don't use alone.

Try to use with someone else who will look out for you.

If you do use alone, let someone know so they can check in on you.

option 5

Test the hit.

Try a small amount of a deal first to check the strength.

Gear may have changed since you last used. Sniff, snort or test the hit first.

option 6

Prepare your own drugs.

This is the only way to know how strong your hit is, and exactly what's in it.

Remember, you can always do more, but you can't do less.

option 7

Make a pact.

If you use with other people, agree what you will do if someone overdoses.

Most overdoses happen when there is someone else around.

option 8

Get some training.

Find out if your local drugs service runs overdose training.

The things you learn could save someone else's life – and help you deal with your own risk of overdosing.

option 9

**Carry on as before.
(But you will be taking risks.)**

**The decision is
yours.**

LAURETTA'S STORY

“David opted for detox in prison and was clean when he got out. He was really turning his life around. He got a flat and enrolled for college, and seemed really happy. Last time I saw him was on a Friday. On the Sunday he was

found dead in his flat. When they found him, the iron was still plugged in. It looked like he was just ironing a shirt, ready to go out for a mate's birthday.

...LAURETTA'S STORY

I'm sure the overdose was just a mistake. He wasn't managing his dose. He was dabbling, and he'd gone back to what he was using before. **BUT HIS BODY JUST COULDN'T TAKE IT.**

David was my nephew. He died three years ago. Me and his Mum started a support group for other families who've lost loved ones through drugs. We often ask ourselves what David would be doing today if he was alive."

IF YOU'RE CLEAN, GO EASY

OVERDOSE BASICS

WHAT IS an overdose?

A DRUG OVERDOSE IS

**when you take more
drugs than your body can**

SAFELY handle.

DAMIAN'S STORY

“I’ve seen quite a few near fatal overdoses. People can go really close to the edge. Unless you know what to look for, it can be really hard to spot the signs. You can easily think they’re just gouching out.”

overdose signs: **DEPRESSANTS**

(heroin, methadone, benzos)

Moderate: uncontrollable nodding, can't focus eyes, very slurred speech, drooling, pale skin.

Serious: awake but can't talk, very limp, erratic or shallow breathing, heavy vomiting.

Severe: unconscious, blue skin or nails, problems breathing or not breathing at all, choking or gurgling, lying in vomit.

overdose signs: **STIMULANTS**

(crack, coke, speed)

Moderate: babbling, heavy paranoia, pale skin, clammy skin, clenched jaws, aggression, the shakes, very fast pulse.

Serious: can't focus eyes, vomiting, foaming at the mouth, pressure or tightness in the chest, can't talk, can't walk, violent actions.

Severe: seizures, unconscious, choking or gurgling, not breathing, no pulse.

DAMIAN'S STORY

“I remember giving this woman a hit after she'd been smoking. Only a small amount. But I saw straight away she was going beyond a gouch. She started going stiff, and her lips were changing colour.

I CALLED AN AMBULANCE.

They took 10 minutes to come. Her breathing was getting lighter and

lighter. She was given Narcan intravenously and came round in about four seconds.

THE AMBULANCE CREW WERE REALLY HAPPY TO HAVE SAVED SOMEONE.

They hadn't been called in time for anybody else they'd seen that month. Shows what a difference a few minutes can make.”

AFTER AN OVERDOSE, EVERY MINUTE COUNTS

OVERDOSE SIGNS: WHAT TO DO

If someone is unconscious after an overdose:

- 1** Don't panic. Put them the recovery position (see next page).
- 2** Dial 999 and ask for an ambulance.
- 3** Stay with them until the ambulance arrives.

calling an ambulance saves lives

If you're worried about the police coming, just tell the operator that someone is unconscious and then explain things properly when the ambulance comes. When you ring 999, try to make sure there is no shouting or panic in the background.

In a lot of areas, the police don't come to overdose situations any more. Try to find out the policy in your local area from your local drugs service.

the recovery position

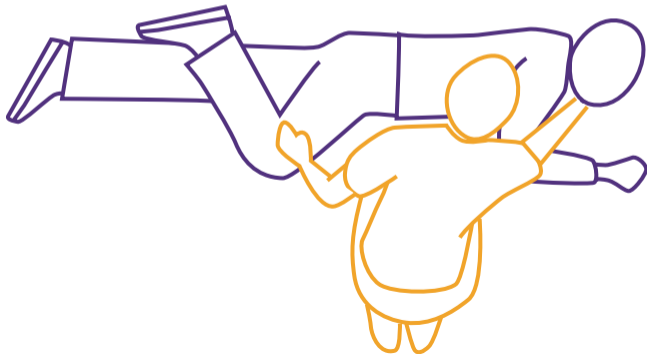
For someone who is unconscious, but still breathing:

- 1 Lie the person straight out on their back.
- 2 Open their airway by tilting their head back and lifting their chin.
- 3 Put the arm nearest to you at right angles to their body.
- 4 Pull the other arm across their chest, so that the back of their hand rests against their cheek.

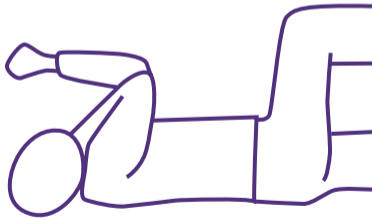


5 Lift the leg furthest away from you, from just above and behind the knee, until their foot is flat on the ground and their knee is bent

6 Keep their hand pressed against their cheek, and gently pull the bent knee towards you, so that they roll onto their side.



- 7 Tilt their head back to make sure they can breathe easily.
- 8 Make sure that their hip and the knee of their upper leg are bent at right angles.



YOU WON'T GET IT RIGHT UNLESS YOU TRY IT.

Practice the recovery position

— maybe with friends — until

YOU CAN DO IT EASILY. If you

do first aid training, you can

also **LEARN TECHNIQUES** like

mouth to mouth and chest

compression, to keep someone's

breathing and circulation going.

WHAT NOT TO DO

If someone is **UNCONSCIOUS**

AFTER AN OVERDOSE, there

is nothing you can do to wake

them up. The best hope

of saving their life is to

CALL AN AMBULANCE.

Don't walk people around.

It wastes time, they could fall, or the drugs could get pumped into their bloodstream quicker.

Don't put them in a cold bath.

Wastes time, and there's a risk of them drowning or dying of cold.

Don't hurt, hit or burn them.

This is another time waster – and could cause an injury.

Don't inject them with salt water.

This won't help and might be harmful if you don't inject safely. (When paramedics use a salt drip, it's just to keep the vein open.)

“I remember Mike. He'd been in prison for 15 years. He was only out for one weekend. **FIRST HIT HE HAD, HE OVERDOSED.** He died in the ambulance.”

ADAM

GO EASY AFTER A BREAK

Contact your local drugs service
or talk to FRANK on 0800 77 66 00

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