

Opioids: harm minimisation strategies

Understand your substance

Heroin: due to varying purity and potency, start with a small dose to assess strength, especially if you are a new user or returning after a break.

Set and setting

Know your body & mind (set): be aware of your mental and physical state before using. Anxiety, stress, or poor health can exacerbate negative effects.

Know your environment (setting): use in a safe, controlled environment. Being around trusted people ensures that help is available in emergencies.

Mixing and masking effects

Avoid mixing substances: especially depressants like alcohol and benzos, which can dangerously enhance sedation and respiratory depression.

Stimulants: substances like cocaine can mask the depressive effects of opioids, leading to a false sense of alertness and a higher risk of overdose.

Measure your doses: use tools like milligram scales for precise dosing. For heroin, use a very small amount first to test potency.

Carry naloxone: naloxone can reverse an opioid overdose if administered in time. Always have it on hand, especially if using opioids regularly.

Hydrate and nourish: stay hydrated and eat nutritious foods to support overall health, as opioids can suppress appetite and lead to dehydration.

Supportive care

Nutritional support: maintain a balanced diet to help the body recover. Supplements and hydration can help replenish nutrients lost during withdrawal.

Hydration: drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration, especially if experiencing vomiting or diarrhoea.

Counseling and support groups: engage in therapy or support groups like Narcotics Anonymous to address the psychological aspects of withdrawal and recovery.



Contact us for support

If you're struggling with alcohol or other drugs, we're here for you.

We offer a variety of community and residential programs throughout Queensland and New South Wales, helping thousands of people every year to navigate alcohol and drug challenges and move forward in life.

 **1300 727 957**

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Risky mixes with opioids (heroin and prescription opioids):

Opioids and alcohol



Risks: increases sedation, leading to potential unconsciousness and fatal respiratory depression.

Symptoms: extreme drowsiness, confusion, slowed or irregular breathing.

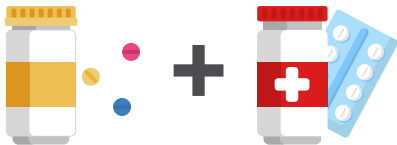
Opioids and cocaine



Risks: masks opioid effects, increasing overdose risk as stimulants wear off.

Symptoms: agitation, false sense of alertness, followed by sudden opioid overdose symptoms.

Opioids and benzodiazepines
(e.g., Xanax, Valium)



Risks: increases the sedative effects, leading to severe respiratory depression and possible death.

Symptoms: severe sedation, respiratory arrest, coma.

Opioids and antihistamines
(e.g., diphenhydramine)



Risks: increases sedation and respiratory depression.

Symptoms: drowsiness, increased overdose risk, difficulty concentrating.

Remember:

The effects of any substance can vary based on individual factors, environment, tolerance, and purity.

No dose is completely without risk. When possible, start low and go slow, avoid using alone, and take steps to care for yourself and others.