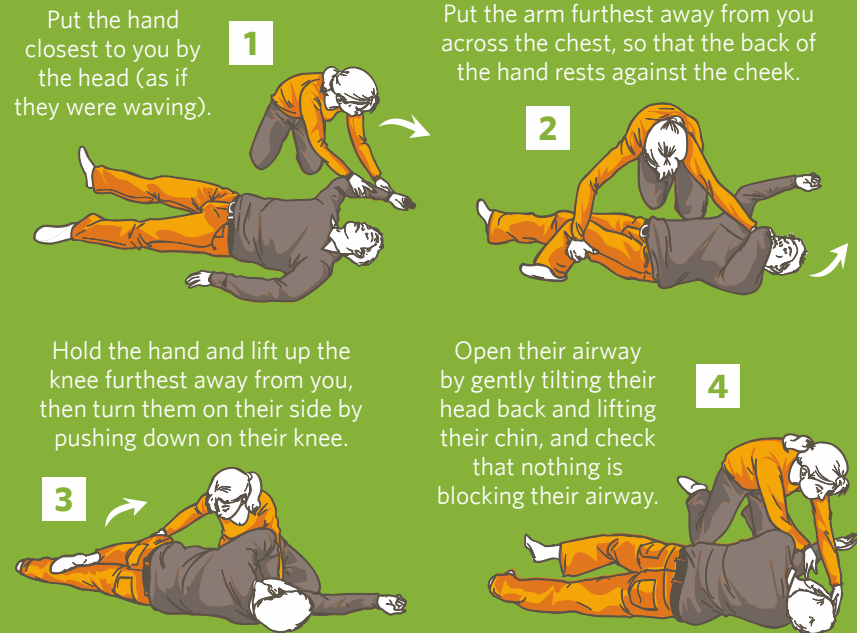


THE RECOVERY POSITION



NALOXONE

Opioids (such as heroin and methadone) were implicated in 86% of drug-related deaths in Scotland in 2019. Naloxone is a life-saving medicine that temporarily reverses the effects of an opioid overdose by 'kicking' the opioid out of the receptors in the brain, allowing normal breathing and heart rate to resume.

Naloxone should be given to anyone who is non-responsive and displaying the signs of an overdose. If you are unsure if the person has taken opioids, always use naloxone as this will not cause any harm. If they do have opioids in their system amongst other drugs, reversing the effects may be enough to bring that person round.

Anyone over the age of 16 can get a naloxone kit easily. Get one delivered by visiting Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs:

www.sfad.org.uk/support-services/take-home-naloxone

KEY MESSAGES

Always call for help as soon as you can and be as honest as possible. Try to tell the emergency services what the person has taken, how much of it they took and how long ago they have taken it.

DON'T

- Leave them alone
- Inflict excessive pain to wake them
- Give any other drug
- Encourage them to vomit
- Give them anything to eat or drink (apart from small sips of water)
- Put them in a bath/shower
- Walk them about or attempt to restrain them

SIGNPOSTING AND SUPPORT



You can get in touch with the Crew Drop-in to chat about drugs and harm reduction. You might find some of the services below useful too!

www.crew.scot

- **Families Outside** | www.familiesoutside.org.uk | 08002540088
- **Know the Score** | www.knowthescore.info
- **Release** | www.release.org.uk | 020 7324 2989
- **Scottish Drugs Forum** | www.sdf.org.uk
- **Scottish Drug Services Directory** | www.scottishdrugservices.com
- **Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs** | www.sfad.org.uk 08080 10 10 11
- **Turning Point** | www.turningpointscotland.com
- **We Are With You** | www.wearewithyou.org.uk

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DRUG EMERGENCIES



DRUG EMERGENCIES

People take drugs for many different reasons and in many different settings. Harm reduction strategies can reduce the risks associated with taking drugs but cannot remove them completely. This leaflet covers what you need to know about drug-related emergencies.

Someone's health might be affected if they have a bad reaction to a drug, they have taken different drugs at the same time, they have taken too much of a drug (an overdose), they have injured themselves while taking drugs, or the drugs they have taken have brought on or made an existing health condition worse.

A drug-related emergency might be something that is affecting someone's physical health, or it might affect their mental health. Both should be taken seriously.

IN AN EMERGENCY

- Keep calm and get help
- Call 999. Give as much information as possible including location, age, gender, what has happened and be honest about what they have taken
- Stay with them and check on them regularly
- If they are very worried or distressed, sit them somewhere calm and give reassurance
- If they are having a seizure (fitting), keep the area safe and move anything that could hurt them
- If they are unconscious, put in the recovery position (or on their side) and monitor breathing
- If they stop breathing, call 999 and if you know how to do them start chest compressions. The call handler will provide guidance and support on what to do if you aren't sure
- If you have someone there, ask them to get a defibrillator
- Carry a resuscitation face mask/shield. If you are unable or don't feel comfortable giving rescue breaths, give chest compressions only
- If you think opioids may be involved, administer naloxone

MENTAL HEALTH

Sometimes when people take drugs the effects might feel overwhelming or uncomfortable. Some people can take too much of a drug and be okay physically but become worried, scared or anxious. It is important to take them seriously and remember that mental health can be an emergency too.

Always try to stay calm, reassure the person and help them to move somewhere quiet and comfortable. Get help if you need it. If in doubt, call 999 for an ambulance.

UPPER DRUGS

Different types of drugs have different effects on your body and your brain. Some drugs will have what is known as an 'upper' effect. We call these stimulant drugs because they stimulate your central nervous system - so they speed up your heart rate, reaction time and you feel like you have more energy.

Drugs in this category include caffeine, nicotine, cocaine, amphetamine (speed) and drugs like mephedrone (known as Mcat).

Drugs like MDMA (the active ingredient in ecstasy pills) also have a stimulant effect.

Stimulant drugs can cause the body to heat up and people to sweat - this means that they are at risk of dehydration if they become overly sweaty.

If someone takes too much of a stimulant drug, they might experience the effects of a stimulant overdose.

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- Seizures/fitting/rigid
- Hyperthermia (overheating)
- Severe nausea and vomiting
- Rapid heart rate/chest pains
- Hallucinations
- Difficulty breathing
- Anxiety/fear/panic



DOWNER DRUGS

Downer drugs have the opposite effect to stimulant drugs. They slow down your central nervous system, meaning they slow your breathing, your heart rate and your reaction time. We call these 'depressant drugs' but we aren't talking about the effect on your mood - they might still give you a buzz or feeling of euphoria but, if you take too much, your breathing and heart rate can slow down to life-threatening levels.

Drugs in this category include benzodiazepines like Xanax and Valium (diazepam); opioids like heroin, methadone and lean; and alcohol.

Drugs like ketamine and nitrous oxide (laughing gas) can also slow your breathing if you take larger doses or mix them with other drugs.

If someone takes too much of a depressant drug, they might experience the effects of a depressant overdose.

Mixing different downer drugs (including alcohol or medicines) puts you at more risk of an overdose and is the most common type of overdose in Scotland.

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- Unconsciousness - won't wake with a shout or a shake
- Confusion
- Severe nausea and vomiting
- Seizures/fitting
- Slow or erratic pulse (heartbeat)
- Difficulty breathing/snoring/raspy breathing
- Blue/pale tingeing of knees, hands and lips
- Pale, cold and clammy skin
- Pin-point pupils (in opioid overdose)



DRUG MARKETS

Drugs in circulation may produce different and stronger effects than expected. The product that you buy may not always be the product that you expect.

During 2020 we carried out surveys about the impact of lockdown restrictions on the way drugs were bought, sold and taken. The majority of people told us that the quality of drugs had decreased. This doesn't necessarily mean that the drugs that you buy will be weaker.

Many of these 'New Psychoactive Substances' that are circulating Europe, most notably benzo-type drugs are extremely potent. This means that people would need to take significantly less to feel the same effects and it is easier to overdose.

The active ingredient can be spread unevenly throughout a batch of pills. This means some pills contain no psychoactive substance, whereas others that look the same can contain much more than expected.

IF YOU TAKE DRUGS

- Avoid mixing with other drugs. If you do mix, take less of each drug than you would if you were only taking one.
- It can take a few hours to feel the full effects. Wait as long as you can between doses (at least two hours).