

Overdose Risk Information sheet



Date.....

Client's name.....

Worker's name.....

Comments.....

Mixing sedative drugs

Heroin, methadone, benzodiazepines (such as diazepam) and alcohol all absorb into the blood stream at different rates. When mixed, once fully absorbed, they could cause your breathing to stop. Individually, all of these drugs slow your breathing.

High tolerance

The more you use heroin, the higher your tolerance becomes. The higher your tolerance, the more you need to get a high. The more you use, the closer you are to overdosing.

Low tolerance

When you stop using heroin, methadone or other opiates for a week or so, your tolerance drops quite quickly. So, starting to use again on the same dose you were on could be too much for your body to handle and it could kill you.

Injecting

The effects are quick and you're more likely to use higher doses as your tolerance increases, so there's more risk of overdose.

Smoking

Smoking is an alternative way to get heroin into your body. You'll get a rush, but have fewer health risks and you're less likely to overdose. There is still a potential risk of combination depressant overdose if heroin is smoked in combination with any other type of depressant taken.

Using other people's drugs

Don't use drugs that haven't been prescribed to you as you could be putting yourself at risk.

Speed-balling/snowballing

Heroin is increasingly being used in association with crack, either taken at the same time or used as a way to deal with the come down effects. This is called 'speedballing' or 'snowballing'.

Whether you've come to crack through heroin, or heroin through crack, using these two substances together can magnify the effects and be dangerous.

Crack, cocaine and stimulants

Using crack or cocaine can lead to a stroke or a heart attack. Strokes are thought to be caused by the constriction of blood vessels and the repeated increase in blood pressure. Combining these drugs with alcohol can increase this risk and the risk of liver damage.

Increased depression

Drug and alcohol use can increase depression and feelings of hopelessness, which may lead to more unsafe behaviour.

Signs of an overdose

Signs can include one or more of the following:

- extremely slow and shallow breathing
- convulsions
- pinpoint pupils
- confusion
- possibly coma or death

If you see someone overdosing dial 999 to call an ambulance immediately.