

How to access further support

A near fatal overdose can be distressing. Being around people and talking with friends, family or a support worker can help in the days after.

If you are supported by a service, your support worker can help you to make a plan to keep safe in the future.

If you aren't receiving support from a service, finding out what's available in your area could be helpful. Accessing treatment and support can help reduce your risk of future overdose. Please see our list of useful links for more information.

Useful links

- Find out more about Scottish Drugs Forum at: sdf.org.uk
- Delivered by Simon Community Scotland, **By My Side** is a digital one stop shop for harm reduction, sexual health and mental health support. simonscotland.org/programme/by-my-side/
- The Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards are guidelines in Scotland for providing high-quality, accessible, and person-centred treatment for drug use. matstandards.co.uk
- **WithYou** offers a free webchat service, staffed by trained support workers. It is available 364 days a year, closing only on Christmas Day. wearewithyou.org.uk
- Get support from the Chest, Heart, Stroke advice line. chss.org.uk
- **The Resuscitation Council** offers peer support for witnesses and bystanders to CPR, as well as survivors. resus.org.uk
- Find out about the signs of overdose and get information on naloxone at stopthedeaths.com

Find out about other support



sdf.org.uk
enquiries@sdf.org.uk
0141 221 1175

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What to expect after a near fatal overdose



Information and advice for people who have experienced a near fatal opioid or depressant overdose

sdf.org.uk

stopthedeaths.com



What is an opioid or depressant overdose?

An overdose happens when someone takes more substances than their body can cope with. If the person becomes unconscious, this is the point of overdose. The central nervous system slows down, reducing breathing, and oxygen levels fall. As oxygen levels drop, the brain and heart can be affected within minutes.

An overdose can be fatal.

Recognising a suspected opioid or depressant overdose

- Unresponsive to any stimulation
 - Pale skin
 - Blue lips
 - Shallow breathing
 - Noisy rasping breaths or snoring
 - Pinpoint pupils
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In the first few hours after a near fatal overdose

Waking after a near fatal overdose can feel distressing. You may feel groggy, confused, disorientated, anxious, agitated or distressed. This can be from the shock of coming round in an unfamiliar way, or due to a lack of oxygen to the brain. Oxygen shortage can also affect your memory, attention, speech and thinking – sometimes short term, sometimes longer.

If naloxone has been used, you might experience withdrawal symptoms – these can include sickness and stomach symptoms, sweats, shaking, aches and pains. These feelings are temporary. As naloxone wears off after 20-30 mins, the withdrawal symptoms will lessen, and you will start to feel better. **It is risky to use more drugs in the first few hours after an overdose, as you could overdose again.**

If you can, go to hospital. This allows medical staff to see any injuries or conditions that may need treatment.

When to see a doctor

If you don't see a paramedic or attend the hospital immediately after your near fatal overdose, you may need to seek medical treatment in the days after the near fatal overdose. Look out for:

- **Confusion – changes in thinking, memory and orientation that persist after the near fatal overdose.**
 - **Burns – overdoses near heat sources can cause burns. Any burn bigger than the size of your hand needs urgent treatment.**
 - **Persistent pain or tingling in limbs - lying unconscious can cut off blood supply to a limb.**
 - **Hidden injuries or broken bones caused by a fall.**
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