

HARM REDUCTION

- **Downer drugs depress the central nervous system which means they slow down heart rate and breathing.**
- Downer drugs include opioids (such as heroin, methadone, buprenorphine, tramadol and codeine) and depressants (such as benzos, alcohol, zopiclone and gabapentinoids).
- **Mixing drugs (including alcohol and medicines) is risky and should be avoided. Mixing downer drugs is dangerous and increases the risk of respiratory depression (slowed breathing) and death.**
- The contents, purity and strength can vary widely between drugs, even if they look the same.

If you take drugs...

- **Start with a test dose** every time you get a new batch/packet, even if they look genuine or like ones you have had before.
- **Avoid sharing paraphernalia** (including snorting tools, injecting equipment, joints, pipes, vapes) as this can spread infections. Make sure your equipment is marked and easy to identify so you don't get mixed up.
- **Tolerance can develop quickly.** This means that a higher dose is needed to achieve the intended effect, which increases the risk of overdose and dependency.
- **Make a note of when you dosed** and set reminders for important tasks. Downers can affect your memory and can make it difficult to keep track of the time.
- **Avoid taking drugs while alone** if possible. If you are by yourself it is a good idea to arrange someone to check in with you by text, phone or online.
- **Sleep on your side** if you have been taking drugs. This will help to keep your airway clear.

FIND SUPPORT

1. In an overdose

Call 999 and ask for an ambulance

2. Community Addiction Recovery Service (CAREs)

Clydesdale Locality

- Carluke Community Health Centre, 40 Chapel Street, Carluke, ML8 4BA Tel: 01698 754440
- Clydesdale Social Work Locality Council Offices, South Vennel, Lanark, ML11 7JT Tel: 01555 673578

East Kilbride Locality

- Hunter Community Health Centre, Andrew Street, East Kilbride, G74 1AD Tel: 01355 597456
- East Kilbride Social Work Locality Office, Civic Centre, Andrew Street, East Kilbride, G74 1AD Tel: 01355 807000

Hamilton Locality

- Douglas Street Community Health Clinic, 19 Douglas Street, Hamilton, ML3 0DR Tel: 01698 368711
- Hamilton Social Work Locality Office, Brandon Gate, Leechlee Road, Hamilton, ML3 0XB Tel: 01698 455400

Rutherglen/Cambuslang Locality

- Cambuslang Gate, 27 Main Street, Cambuslang, G72 7HB Tel: 0141 584 2515

3. The Beacons | www.thebeacons.org.uk

- 1-3 Station Road, Blantyre, G72 9AA Tel: 01698 755926
- 1 High Street, Lanark, ML11 7LU Tel: Tel: 01555 660379
- Unit 7b, Cambuslang Gate, Main Street, Cambuslang, G72 7EX (Please contact via Blantyre Beacon)

4. Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs

Visit: www.sfad.org.uk | Tel: 0808 010 1011

5. Crew

For more drug harm reduction info or to find out about Crew's services, visit: www.crew.scot

SAVE A LIFE

How to respond to a drugs overdose

LEARN THE SIGNS OF A DRUGS OVERDOSE & WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY



BENZOS

Benzodiazepine tablets in circulation may produce different and stronger effects than expected.

Pills sold as 'diazepam', 'Valium' or 'vallis' may not contain only (or any) diazepam. Instead, they often contain 'street benzos' such as etizolam, flubromazolam and flualprazolam.

Many of these 'New Psychoactive Substance' benzos are extremely potent. This means that you need significantly less to feel the same effects and it is easier to overdose on.

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.

In Scotland, benzodiazepine-related deaths have increased from 149 in 2008 to 888 in 2019, so it is important to be extra careful if taking them.

If you take benzos:

- 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).
- Benzos can accumulate (build-up) and you may have more in your body than expected, which increases the risk of overdose.
- Sudden withdrawal from heavy/regular use is dangerous and can be fatal. Try to gradually reduce your intake.

Signs of a downer drug overdose include...

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

OVERDOSE

In the event of an overdose:

DO

- 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 distressed**, sit them somewhere calm and give reassurance
- **If they are 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 start chest compressions. The call handler will provide guidance and support on what to do
- If you have someone there, ask them to get a defibrillator
- Carry a resuscitation face mask/shield. If you are unable or unwilling to give rescue breaths, give chest compressions only
- If opioids are involved, or if you are unsure if they are, always administer naloxone

RECOVERY POSITION

1. Put the hand closest to you by the head (as if they were waving).



2. Put the arm furthest away from you across the chest, so that the back of the hand rests against the cheek.



3. Hold the hand and lift up the knee furthest away from you, then turn them on their side by pushing down on their knee.



4. Open their airway by gently tilting their head back and lifting their chin, and check that nothing is blocking their airway.



DO NOT

- Leave them alone
- Inflict excessive pain to wake them
- Give any other psychoactive 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

STIMULANTS

The majority of drug-related deaths in Scotland involve downer drugs but upper drugs (such as cocaine, MDMA and amphetamine) can also cause overdose.

Signs of a stimulant overdose include...

- Seizures/fitting/rigid
- Severe nausea and vomiting
- Rapid heart rate/chest pains/heart attack
- Hallucinations
- Difficulty breathing
- Anxiety/fear/panic
- Hyperthermia (overheating) - if they are overheating, take them somewhere cooler, loosen clothing, cool them with fans or wet towels and give them small sips of water

OPIOIDS

Opioids (such as heroin, codeine and methadone) were implicated in 86% of drug-related deaths in Scotland in 2019.

Carry naloxone. 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.

Naloxone training and kits are available from NHS Lanarkshire's Harm Reduction Team (tel: 01698 753657, email: HarmReductionTeam@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk) or get naloxone delivered by visiting Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs: www.sfad.org.uk/take-home-naloxone