

Safer Use Plan

WELCOME

Welcome to our program! We are happy you are here and strive to make this a safe environment for everyone.

One of the ways people cope with trauma is to use substances. When people seek safety, they may not be ready to stop using and we want you to know that we respect where you are in your readiness to change. This safety plan will give you tools and information to make safer decisions about your use of substances.

BEING SAFE BEGINS WITH BEING INFORMED

Safer drug use is about lessening the negative effects that using drugs can cause. Harm Reduction strategies help prevent overdose and infections related to drug use. The following information has been taken from the National Harm Reduction website harmreduction.org.

Information is power. We want to first provide you with some facts and information about overdose risks for you to keep in mind. The following information has been taken from harmreduction.org the national harm reduction organization.

Remember: you know your body and how you normally feel when you use. Pay attention to any changes and if you feel "different" or "off" after use.

INFORMATION ABOUT FENTANYL

- Fentanyl is about 50x stronger than heroin.
- Fentanyl is being "cut" into almost all other types of drugs. So even if you don't use heroin, you may be at risk for exposure.
- Naloxone (Narcan) is effective on someone overdosing on fentanyl.
- Fentanyl moving through the street market comes in the form of a white, gray or tan powder and can be injected, smoked, or snorted. It has also been found in other drugs, like heroin, meth, cocaine, and pressed pills.

INFORMATION ABOUT "OVERAMPING"

Overamping can be called an "overdose" but more accurately describes behaviors, feelings, or a state of mind that occur when the use of stimulants or "speed" turns "bad". Overamping doesn't necessarily mean you used "too much" like the word overdose implies. Some things that can cause overamping are:

- You've been up for too long (sleep deprivation).
- Your body is worn down from not eating or drinking enough water.
- You're in a weird or uncomfortable environment or with people that are sketching you out.

- You did “that one hit too many.”
- You mixed some other drugs with your speed that have sent you into a bad place.

Please note that overamping can be very serious and lead to permanent health issues or death. Please call 911 or seek help immediately if you experience these or other unusual symptoms.

Signs and symptoms of overamping can include (this list is not exhaustive):

- Nausea/Vomiting.
- Sweating profusely, high temperature and chills (like having a high fever).
- Tightness or pain in the chest and back.
- Shortness of breath.
- Limb jerking, stiff or rigid limbs.
- Severe headache.
- Rapid heart rate.
- Stroke.
- Seizures.

For more information about overamping visit www.harmreduction.org.

RISK AND RISK PREVENTION

Below is a list of risks and associated prevention strategies to avoid fatal and non-fatal overdose. In the boxes below, write down the risks that apply to you and the prevention strategies you are likely to use.

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RISK: Mixing Substances

Using heroin and fentanyl together, using alcohol and Xanax together, etc.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES:

- Use one drug at a time (and wait to see how each affects you).
- Reduce the amount of each drug you are taking (half a gram/shot instead of a whole shot, one pill instead of two, etc).
- Avoid mixing alcohol with pills and/or heroin (these are incredibly dangerous combinations).
- If you are using alcohol with heroin or pills, use the heroin or pills first to gauge how high you are.

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RISK: Low or High Tolerance

You have low tolerance (it doesn't take very much for you to feel the effects) or high tolerance (it takes a lot for you to feel the desired effects).

PREVENTION STRATEGIES:

- Use less when you haven't used for a while. Even a few days of abstinence can lower your tolerance.

- Do a test shot first with just a little bit in the needle to see how it affects you.
- Use a different method, i.e., snort instead of injecting.

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RISK: Quality of Your Drugs is Compromised

Your drugs are cut or mixed with other drugs that you may not be aware of

PREVENTION STRATEGIES:

- Test the drugs by using less or using a different method.
 - Buy from the same dealer so you have an idea of what you're getting.
 - If using a new dealer, ask others who have gotten drugs from them about their experience.
 - Try not to switch to a new type of pill/opioid.
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RISK: You Use Alone

PREVENTION STRATEGIES:

- Use with someone else whenever possible.
 - Have a plan with the person or people you are using with. Decide who will use first, what you will do if someone overdoses, etc.
 - Leave the door unlocked or slightly open so emergency personnel can get to you.
 - Check in with a designated staff person (every hour or so) or permission for the staff to check-in with you periodically.
 - Identify at least one person you feel safe keeping in contact with while you are using.
 - Allow your safety person to inform staff if you need help.
 - Keep Naloxone (Narcan) with you even if you are alone. Some people can tell when they are about to "go out" and have been successful using Naloxone on themselves!
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RISK: You are Older or Have Health Problems

Being older, having a long use history, and/or having physical health problems increase your risk of fatal overdose. If you have heart or lung problems, HIV, Hepatitis C, respiratory illness, or other infections like an abscess, please consider seeing a doctor. If you have had bad experiences with doctors in the past, we would like to help you find some other options.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES:

- Take care of your basic needs: make sure you are eating well, sleeping well, and staying hydrated.
 - If you use an inhaler, make sure you have it on you and let others know where to find it.
 - If you have liver problems, avoid pills that have acetaminophen in them (the ingredient in Tylenol) like Percocet, and Vicodin.
 - Go slow and use less if you have been sick, lost weight or are not feeling well.
 - Go slow if your basic needs aren't being met (you haven't been eating well, sleeping well, etc.).
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RISK: You Have Overdosed Before

PREVENTION STRATEGIES:

- Avoid buying from dealers that sold you “bad drugs” before.
 - Use fentanyl test strips on your drugs regardless of the drug you are using.
 - Avoid using alone.
 - Have Naloxone with you and make sure that the people with you have it as well.
 - Tell someone that you plan to use and that you are at higher risk.
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My Risks Are

My Prevention Strategies Are

BEING SAFE MEANS HAVING A PLAN

In addition to identifying risks and prevention strategies for overdose, there are other ways we can help you plan to use safely. Let’s plan for the who, what, when, where, and how of safer use.

Remember, this plan stays with YOU. We want to help you create this plan, but that doesn’t mean you have to disclose all the information to us if you don’t want to.

WHO

Who is the person or people that you feel safe talking to about your use? This means, who would you likely tell that you are planning to use and possibly have check-in on you?

Note: if you don't feel comfortable writing down names you can put "best friend", "co-worker", "shelter/program staff" or some other identifying information only you will know.

Name or Identifier _____

Name or Identifier _____

Do you have their number saved in your phone? If not, let's do that now!

TIP: Make sure you tell them that you have chosen them as someone to tell when you are using. Come up with a code word if that feels safer for you.

TIP: Ask what the best time of day is to contact this person: _____
is the best time of day.

TIP: Make this person aware of any new places or people you may be around while you are using. Consider giving some identifying information so they can get help to you if you need it.

TIP: Come up with a safe word to use if you feel you are in danger.

Use these tips for each person you identify. If you don't have someone you can talk to, consider listing a staff person. Be aware that the staff member you choose may need to share this with staff on other shifts. We will not judge you. We want you to be safe.

WHO IS THE PERSON OR PEOPLE YOU FEEL SAFE USING WITH

Name or Identifier _____

Name or Identifier _____

- Do you or they have Naloxone (Narcan)? If not, we can help you get a kit.
- Are you willing to take turns to ensure the other person does not overdose?
- Do you have fentanyl test strips? If not, we can give you some! These can help no matter what type of drug you use.
- Do you have sterile wipes or bandages? If not, we can provide those for you.
- If you need access to sterile syringes/needles, we can help you find a place to get them.

WHAT

We want to help you identify **WHAT** you need to make using safer for you.

Making Using Drugs Safer

Check all the things you need to make using safer.

- ☐ Clean or sterile needles.
- ☐ Fentanyl test strips.
- ☐ Naloxone/Narcan kit.
- ☐ Sterile wipes and Band-Aids/bandages.
- ☐ A phone or access to a phone.
- ☐ A safe place to use.
- ☐ Something to keep my drugs or paraphernalia in (a lock box or bag) to keep my children safe or prevent my things from being taken/stolen.
- ☐ Other

WHEN

When you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, what do you like to do?

- ☐ Be by myself.
- ☐ Color (use coloring books).
- ☐ Clean or keep busy with a task.
- ☐ Watch television.
- ☐ Listen to music.
- ☐ Talk on the phone or talk to people.
- ☐ Play video or computer games.
- ☐ Spend time with family or friends.
- ☐ Take walks outside.
- ☐ Exercise or be actively moving.
- ☐ Read books or magazines.
- ☐ Other

We would like to remind you of some of the things you have chosen or provide them for you if we are able. Is it ok if we keep a note of the things you checked?

WHEN AND WHERE

When you use can affect your ability to access childcare, transportation, your ability to make it to work or necessary appointments and/or affect your ability to access emergency help.

What time of day are you *most likely* to use?

- ☐ Morning (between 8 a.m. and 12 p.m.).
- ☐ Afternoon (between 12 p.m. and 4 p.m.).
- ☐ Evening (between 4 p.m. and 12 a.m.).
- ☐ Overnight (between 12 a.m. and 8 a.m.).

Consider the following barriers and check those that apply to the time of day you chose.

- ☐ Childcare.
- ☐ Transportation.
- ☐ Somewhere safe to use.
- ☐ I'm more at risk of seeing my abusive partner during this time.
- ☐ It would be difficult for someone to talk to, be with, or help me if I needed emergency assistance during this time.
- ☐ Other

For the barriers you checked above, let's brainstorm some ideas to help you with them:

As far as where you use, we realize that safe options may be limited. Our program rules ask that you not use in the shelter. We want to avoid ANY situation that may jeopardize your ability to stay with us. To that end, where are some safe or safer places you can use?



HOW

How you use can increase the likelihood of overdose and the likelihood of contracting diseases like HIV and Hepatitis.

- Avoid sharing needles.
- Don't reuse your own needles. Dried blood or blood that has been left in a needle for a period of time can have bacteria that can cause health risks.
- Needle use increases the likelihood of overdose more than other methods.
- Consider snorting or smoking first until you see how the drug affects you.
- When snorting, always use a clean straw or tube.
- Always use a sterile wipe to clean your injection sites or where you insert the needle. We can provide these to you if you need them.
- If you notice that your injection site looks infected, swollen, or feels different than normal, consider seeking medical attention.
- Keep your needles, pipes, lighters, etc. in a safe place and away from others. If you need somewhere safe to store the things you use with (a lock box or bag, a sharps container for needle disposal) let us know and we will try to help you get what you need.

If you have any concerns about how you use and your risks, please talk to a staff member!

IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN

Some people who use drugs already have a plan in place for their children if something goes wrong. If you do, let us know so we can assist your children if there is a health or use crisis.

If you do not have a plan, here are some tips for how to create a safety plan with your children.

- Consider the age(s) of your children and what they are capable of doing (i.e. whether they are old enough to dial 911 or to use words that other people will understand).
- Secure childcare when you know you are going to use. Make sure they have access to someone who can care for them.
- Do your children know the signs of overdose? If they are too young or you don't want to

use that language, consider using words or phrases that you are comfortable with but convey the same meaning:

- "If you ever try to wake mommy/daddy and I don't get up, call 911".
- "If mommy/daddy is in the bathroom too long and I don't answer you..."
- Make sure your children have access to Naloxone (Narcan) if they are old enough to know how to use it.
- Keep drugs and paraphernalia away from your children. If you do not know where to store them, talk to staff or get a lock box or bag.

HEAD INJURIES

Sometimes when people use substances or have been abused their head gets hurt. This can cause injuries that aren't always obvious.

HEAD INJURIES CAN OCCURE AFTER A PERSON HAS:

- An overdose that resulted in a loss of or low oxygen levels to the brain.
- Been hit in the head.
- Been choked or strangled.
- Fallen and hit their head (during an overdose, intoxication, or as a result of violence).

Are you having trouble with anything listed below? (Check the ones that apply to you)

Physical Problems

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches. | <input type="checkbox"/> Dizziness. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problem sleeping. | <input type="checkbox"/> Balance problems. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitivity to light or sound. | <input type="checkbox"/> Seizures. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vision problems. | |

Thinking Problems

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remembering things. | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting things started. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-tasking. | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing or prioritizing things. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paying attention or focusing. | <input type="checkbox"/> Controlling emotions or reactions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving. | |

If any of these things are happening to you, please seek medical attention.

We hope this plan helps you make safer decisions when you use. If you think you may be ready to stop using, we can help you begin that journey.