

Know the Risks and Recognize the Signs of an Opioid Emergency



Risk Factors.

Opioid overdose does not just happen only to people who abuse or intentionally misuse opioid medications. People may be at increased risk of an opioid emergency for a variety of reasons, including:

- Combining opioids with other medications, such as anxiety medication
- Consuming alcohol while taking opioids
- Taking any dose of opioids, taking extended release or long acting opioids, beginning opioid therapy, changing an opioid dosage, or switching to a different opioid
- Being a young child in the household of someone taking opioids, or being elderly or debilitated
- Having other conditions such as COPD or sleep apnea, liver or kidney problems, or substance use disorder including opioid use disorder.

Recognize the Signs.

- Unusual sleepiness or unresponsiveness
- Breathing problems, from slow or shallow breathing to not breathing at all
- Very small or “pinpoint” pupils
- Slow heartbeat
- Fingernails or lips turning blue/purple

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