

COVID-19: HARM REDUCTION AND OVERDOSE RESPONSE

COVID-19 is a viral illness that causes a respiratory infection and other health problems.

Fentanyl and other opioids can slow a person's breathing rate, so having COVID-19 may increase the risk of overdose death from opioids.

FIRST RESPONDERS¹

Those responding to a suspected overdose should wear contact droplet personal protective equipment (PPE)

Surgical mask	Put on mask when responding to an overdose. Change your mask if it becomes wet, damaged or soiled and take off mask after response
Eye protection	Face shields (or alternate eye protection such as fully sealed goggles*) to protect your eyes from droplets. Note: prescription glasses are not adequate eye protection
Gloves	Put on gloves and extend to cover your wrists. You must change gloves between each patient. Wash your hands after taking your gloves off.
CPR Pocket Mask	Use the pocket mask in take-home naloxone kits if you choose to give rescue breaths.

Should I give rescue breaths?

- It is at the first aider's discretion to perform or not perform mouth-to-mouth breaths based on personal preference.²
- Whenever CPR is carried out, there is always a risk of infection, particularly if rescue breaths are given without PPE. Taking basic precautions will minimize risk of infection of both the patient and the responder.¹

KEEP EACH OTHER SAFE

Practice Safer Drug Use



Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer often.



Clean high touch surfaces and supplies.



Buddy up - use with someone or let someone know you're using. Remember to keep a 2 meter distance.

* **No large gatherings.**



Start low and go slow, split your doses, or use less if you are feeling unwell.



Avoid sharing supplies, such as cigarettes, joints, pipes, injecting equipment, alcohol

drink containers and other supplies. If you have to share, wipe pipes with alcohol wipes or use new mouthpieces.



Carry naloxone and have an overdose plan.

Responding without Rescue Breaths

Call 9-1-1



Lay a cloth, a towel, or clothing over the person's mouth and nose to reduce any potential spread of the virus.²

Push hard and fast in the centre of the person's chest until advanced help arrives.



References

1. <http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19-harm-reduction.pdf>
2. <https://www.redcross.ca/training-and-certification/first-aid-tips-and-resources/first-aid-tips/first-aid-protocols-for-an-unresponsive-person-during-covid-19>
3. <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/904f-COVID-19-Overdose-Response-Tips.pdf>
4. http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19_RespondingToOpioidODsinOPS_SCS.pdf