

Tips On Helping A Loved One With An Opioid Addiction

EMERGENCY RESPONSE for Opioid Overdose

Nasal Naloxone

1. Try to wake the person

- Shake them and shout
- If no response, grind your knuckles into their breast bone for 5 to 10 seconds.

2. Call for help

- If you report an overdose, many states have laws protecting you and the overdosed person from being charged with drug possession, even if drugs were shared

Someone has overdosed. Someone isn't breathing.

911 calling...

3. Administer nasal naloxone

- Assemble nasal naloxone
- Spray half up each nostril
- Repeat after 2 to 5 minutes if still not conscious

2-5 MINUTES

4. Check for breathing

Give CPR if you have been trained, or do rescue breathing:

- Tilt the head back, open the mouth, and pinch the nose
- Start with 2 breaths into the mouth. Then 1 breath every 5 seconds
- Continue until help arrives

5. Stay with person

- Naloxone wears off in 30 to 90 minutes
- When the person wakes up explain what happened
- If you need to leave, turn the person on his or her side to prevent choking

Graphic via Drugrehab.org

When someone you love has an addiction, it can throw your entire life into a tailspin. It's so difficult to know how to help, and in many cases, when a loved one gets involved things only get more complicated.

[Opioids](#)--which include many different types of drug, from heroin to prescription pain relievers such as oxycodone--have contributed to a widespread [epidemic](#) in the U.S. and have led to thousands of overdoses and deaths, particularly in the last five years. Because they're extremely addictive, they are harder to let go of for many users, even when their relationships, jobs, and very lives are at stake.

While it can feel overwhelming or even impossible to help your loved one get through an addiction to opiates, there are some ways you can help. The key is to start with a good plan, stick to it, and stay strong with the help of friends and family.

Look for the warning signs

Opioid use leaves very distinct warning signs. If you suspect your loved one is abusing drugs, some signs that they may have a problem include:

- needle marks on arms or legs
- small pupils
- lack of personal hygiene
- sleeping too much or too little
- experiencing lapses in judgement
- sudden performance issues at work or school
- visiting multiple doctors for prescriptions

If your loved one is exhibiting any of these symptoms, start a conversation about their wellbeing.

Know how to help

Opioid users are at high risk for overdose, so it's imperative to know how to help in the event of an emergency. In the infographic above, there are several tips on how to administer aid to a person who is overdosing, including shaking them to get them conscious, calling for help immediately, and giving CPR if necessary. It's also a good idea to keep the individual turned onto their side in case they begin vomiting before help arrives.

Don't enable

One of the hardest things to do when it comes to helping your loved one is to stop enabling their behavior. This is because you care about her and don't want to see her in a situation where she may lose her job, her home, or her family; however, if someone who is addicted to a substance has someone to help with finances or with keeping their lives in order, they won't have motivation to get healthy and sober. Your loved one may exhibit new and frustrating behaviors;

she may become manipulative or untrustworthy in order to get what she wants. It's important to stay strong and let her know that you can't help her until she's ready to help herself.

On the flip side, legal issues and homelessness won't help the situation, either. Approach the situation gently, but [set limits](#).

Look for different rehab methods

Going through [treatment](#) can be painful in many ways, and it can also be expensive. To someone who has an addiction, rehab may seem like the last place they want to be. It might be helpful to find some different ways to help your loved one begin the process of recovery. For instance, group therapy or one-on-one counseling sessions can be extremely helpful. Talking with people who have been through it can allow a user to vent and form a bond with someone else without the aid of a substance.

Letting go of those feelings and verbalizing them can bring up painful emotions, however, some of which your loved one may have been numbing with opioids for years. In combination with counseling, art therapy may be a great way for her to get through those feelings in a healthy way. This can include painting, singing, drawing, acting, cooking, writing, sewing, crafting, or sculpting. Anything that allows her to channel her emotions without using a drug is a good thing.

Helping a loved one with such a devastating addiction can be tricky, and every family is different. Talk to your close family members so that everyone is on the same page, and look for support in your community and online. Reach out for help when you're feeling overwhelmed.