

REDUCING THE RISK OF HARM WHILE USING SUBSTANCES

Before using:



Not alone

Plan to use with someone you trust. If you don't have someone you can trust, use the Lifeguard App (lifeguardddh.com) or visit a substance use centre instead of choosing to use alone.



Recognize signs of an overdose before you start using

In an overdose, bodily systems become overloaded and vitals are unable to function properly, which can result in death. Symptoms include chest pain, seizures, headaches, difficulty breathing, delirium, agitation, or anxiety. Call 9-1-1 if you need help.



Get your drugs tested

Test your drugs for contaminants. Many substances - not just heroin or fentanyl - can be contaminated and have deadly effects. Look into which substances your meds might interact with.



Consent

Communicate with your trusted person on what you both are willing or not willing to do. Look up the substances you are considering, recognize potential signs of a negative impact and learn how to reduce possible harms.



Plan ahead

Create a safety plan with someone you trust. Talk about what you both are comfortable with. Keep harm reduction supplies such as condoms, clean needles etc. on hand. Ensure you have a ride home and a safe place to stay.



Pick up Naloxone and learn how to use it

Pick up Naloxone and learn how to use it. Naloxone is a safe antidote that can reverse the effects of opioids such as fentanyl and codeine during an overdose. For information on naloxone training, overdose response and safer substance use, check towardtheheart.com

While using:



Tolerance: start low and go slow

Tolerance to drugs can change if you take breaks. You may be more sensitive to drug effects when you start up again. Don't rely on another person's dose; their tolerance may be different from yours.



Methods of use

Even slower acting methods, such as swallowing, eating or drinking can lead to accidental overdose. If it is your first time using, use a slower acting method.



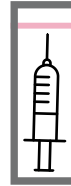
Don't mix

Try one substance at a time to avoid potentially dangerous interactions. Avoid mixing drugs and alcohol.



Comfort is key

Having a familiar space can mean the difference of losing your hit or not. It can be the difference between confident, comfortable decision-making and a rushed, anxious decision.



The *new new*

Use new equipment every time to avoid the risk of transmission and infections. You can access new equipment at sexual health and youth clinics - check towardtheheart.com for ones near you.



Rest is important

Hallucination, aggression, hospitalization can all occur when we don't take care of our sleep hygiene while using substances. Even if you are unable to sleep, getting rest is important. Eat and drink water before and during substance use.

We gratefully acknowledge the Lived Experience Circle of Penticton and Foundry Youth 4 Youth Advisory Committee for their expertise in co-creating this content.

For more information on substance use and how to reduce risk of harm while using substances, visit foundrybc.ca

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