COVID-19: Community Members Responding to Overdose

COVID-19 is a virus spread by droplets (from coughs and sneezes) entering your eyes, nose and mouth, or by touching a surface with droplets on it, then touching your face.

Risks When Responding to an Overdose in the Community

The risk of brain injury or death during an overdose is much higher than the risk of infection with COVID-19. Taking basic precautions will minimize the risk of infection of both the person who overdoses and the responder. Remember your SAVE ME steps, and use the PPE you have as well as the gloves and face shield in the kit.

In the Event of an Overdose

Put on PPE if available. Wash hands and wear gloves.

Stimulate the person. Try and rouse the person, encourage them to take big breaths.

Call 9-1-1. It is always important to get help.

If there is no response, administer naloxone. Give a double dose of naloxone (two vials) to help folks wake up faster.

Provide rescue breaths to restore oxygen to the brain, and administer additional naloxone as needed.

When using a take-home naloxone kit or facility overdose response box:
- Use the face shield/breathing barrier to give rescue breaths.
- The face shield has a one-way valve and covers a lot of the face which protects the responder from droplets.
- After responding, dispose of the face shield before taking off the gloves, and wash your hands thoroughly.

Re-evaluate breathing. Give further doses of naloxone as needed.

Start hands-on CPR if required. If the person’s heart stops, use hands-only chest compressions while lightly covering the person’s nose and mouth with the face shield in your kit, or a handkerchief or T-shirt.

How do I protect myself from COVID-19 when responding to an overdose?

Personal protective equipment (PPE) for droplets and contact precautions when responding to overdose (OD):

- Handwashing is your best protection!
- Surgical Mask
- Eye Protection
- Gloves

What if I don’t have that stuff?

› Wear any gloves you have.
› Wear a homemade mask or bandana (as long as it's not wet!).
› Protect your eyes from droplets by using glasses, goggles or sunglasses.
› Clean your hands after with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
**WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTER THE OVERDOSE?**

1. **CPR Mask** – With your gloves on, touching ONLY the responder’s side of the THN/FORB kit mask, discard in regular garbage.

2. **Gloves** – Grasp palm area of one gloved hand and peel off first glove. Slide fingers of hand under other glove at wrist and peel off, and discard in regular garbage.

3. **Wash your hands**

4. **Eye protection** – Do NOT touch the front of goggles. Wash, disinfect and rinse goggles after every use.

5. **Wash your hands**

6. **Mask** – Grasp ties or elastics at back and remove WITHOUT touching the front, and discard in regular garbage.

7. **Wash your hands after touching your used PPE.** This prevents you from getting infected with any droplets that might have been on the outside. Washing your hands is your best protection against COVID-19.

8. **Get support**: Debrief the event with a friend or get support for your own well-being. We need you!

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- [BCCDC People who use substances](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/priority-populations/people-who-use-substances)
- [COVID-19](http://www.vch.ca/covid-19)
- [VCH COVID-19 substance use resources](https://sneezesdiseases.com/covid-19-community-resources)

For update or more info: overdoseresponse@vch.ca