

COVID-19 and How to Respond to Overdoses

Even though COVID-19 is getting a lot of attention, we know that Toronto's overdose crisis is still going on. To help you respond to overdoses and protect yourself from getting sick, here are a few things to think about:

How is COVID-19 spread?

- It spreads through tiny, mostly unfelt and unseen droplets that come from the airway of someone who is sick with the virus.
- Breathing in the droplets can happen if you are within six feet (two meters) of someone who is sick with COVID-19, whether they have symptoms (like coughing or sore throat) or not.
- If you touch your face after touching a surface, like a door handle, stair railing or phone, that has been touched by a sick person, you can get infected.

How risky is overdose response during COVID?

- Your risk depends on what you do and if the person has COVID-19 or not.
- Breathing for someone during CPR is a direct way to get COVID-19, and we don't know if the naloxone kit face shield will stop the virus.
- Responding to an overdose means you are likely to share each other's germs.
- People can spread the infection even when they don't have symptoms; there is some risk involved during an overdose response.

How can I reduce my risk and the risk to people I care about?

- **Give naloxone and call 911 immediately**- this is the best COVID-19 protection.
- **Avoid giving rescue breaths.**
- Always **wear the gloves** from your kit and put them on before you help anyone.
- **Don't touch your face** while or after helping someone until you clean your hands.
- **Put your used kit in the garbage** immediately after use (but dispose of needles properly).
- **Clean your hands well** (and eyeglasses, facial piercings) after you are done.
- **Carry more naloxone than usual.**
- **Use drugs at an overdose prevention site or supervised injection service.**

Know that you have choices in how you respond to each overdose. Use the skills and knowledge you have to do your best in the situation.

What about face coverings or masks?

Face coverings and cloth masks can help protect others from you accidentally spreading COVID-19. Ensure that the face covering is close-fitting over your nose and mouth. It is important not to touch the front of the face covering while it's on your face.

Responding to overdoses when COVID-19 is spreading around us puts us at risk of infection and infecting others even if we don't have symptoms. **Keep a close eye on your health in the two weeks following an overdose response.** It can take up to 14 days to experience COVID-19 symptoms and it is easily spread to close contacts.

For more information, visit our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.