

SAFE FOR YOU, SAFE FOR ME:

How Businesses Can Help during the Overdose Crisis

The opioid poisoning crisis is increasing in Toronto, and across the country. Preliminary data from 2020 found 521 confirmed opioid-related deaths, up significantly from 293 deaths during 2019.* People who use drugs come from all walks of life – they are our friends, family members and work colleagues.

As a business owner, you or your staff may encounter someone who is overdosing or is otherwise in distress. You and your staff may be in a position to help, including to help save a life. This resource is intended to help create safe spaces for your staff and patrons.

TIPS FOR CREATING A SAFE SPACE

1. Have free water available to offer to people who come into your business.
2. Post overdose prevention and response posters.
3. Check your washrooms regularly to ensure that no one has overdosed inside.
4. Encourage your staff to take the free, online overdose recognition and response training from Toronto Public Health (www.toronto.ca/OverdosePrevention).
5. Have naloxone kits onsite in case someone overdoses. To find out where to get a free kit, visit: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-naloxone-kits-free>.
6. Consider installing sharps containers in your washrooms.
7. Consider washroom doors that open out in case access is needed for overdose response.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP

- Reach out to your local harm reduction program as they may be able to send an outreach worker over or provide other supports (www.toronto.ca/health).
- If you are worried about someone who is homeless, call 311 for the Streets to Homes team.

FIVE STEP OVERDOSE RESPONSE



STEP 1:

Shout & Shake

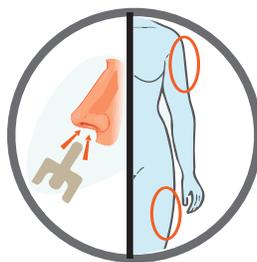
Shout their name and shake their shoulders.



STEP 2:

Call 9-1-1

If the person is unresponsive, call 9-1-1 immediately.



STEP 3:

Administer naloxone

Insert 1 spray into the person's nostril and/or inject 1 ampoule into their arm or leg.



STEP 4:

Start CPR

Perform rescue breathing and/or chest compressions.



STEP 5:

Assess

If there is no improvement in 2–3 minutes, repeat steps 3 & 4.

Protect yourself during overdose response. Stay up-to-date with your COVID-19 and annual flu vaccines.

toronto.ca/OverdosePrevention

HOW TO SAFELY DISPOSE OF A DISCARDED NEEDLE

- Protect your hands, use tongs or puncture resistant gloves
- Hold the needle tip away from you.
- Be careful not to prick yourself with the needle.
- Put the needle into a sharps container, a plastic container with a lid or a sealable puncture proof container.
- Do not put a container with needles into the garbage or recycling bin. Call 311 for options on safe disposal of the container.

DE-ESCALATION TIPS

- Take a breath, stay calm (or pretend you are), keep hands open and in front of your body.
- Speak in a low, calm voice, and keep your facial expressions neutral.
- Keep a public distance away from the person.
- Be non-judgmental and show empathy by trying to identify with/understand their situation, feelings, and motives. Don't say: calm down, I understand, etc.
- Try to make a personal connection - ask them their name and share yours.
- Maintain limited eye contact, but always at their level.
- Minimize your body movements (don't point or shake your finger).
- Encourage them to sit down, but if they don't sit down, you remain standing.
- Be aware of the surroundings - other people/objects - and don't block their way out.
- Listen actively to what they're saying. Show signs that you're following the conversation, clarify and repeat their message by using open-ended questions.
- Empathize with their feelings but not their behaviour.
- A moment of silence can help them reflect on their emotions and make decisions.
- Shift the conversation to the future – “what can we do to make you feel better?”
- Apologies always help. A sincere apology for anything in the situation that was unjust can build credibility in your attempt to de-escalate.
- If de-escalation is not working, stop! If you feel unsafe, leave and call for help.

You may also want to consider crisis de-escalation training for your staff so they are prepared to respond. Reach out to your local community agencies to see if they provide de-escalation training. Training is also available through the Canadian Mental Health Association toronto.cmha.ca/workshops-for-organizations/.



*Source: Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2021.