

# OVERDOSE RISK SELF-ASSESSMENT:

## *A Guide for Loved Ones and Allies*

### \* **Overview**

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing, in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has adapted this tool for loved ones and allies to support Black and Hispanic/Latinx individuals who may be at risk for overdose.

### \* **Purpose**

This overdose risk self-assessment is intended for people who use drugs (PWUD). Once complete, PWUD can discuss the results with a loved one or ally. The tool includes information and resources to reduce overdose risk.

### \* **Target Audiences<sup>1</sup>**

- Black and Hispanic/Latinx individuals at-risk for or living with substance use disorder (SUD).
- Black and Hispanic/Latinx people who use drugs.
- Black and Hispanic/Latinx loved ones and allies.
- Organizations that serve Black and Hispanic/Latinx people who use drugs and their loved ones.

<sup>1</sup> For a tool for clinicians, see *The Overdose Safety Planning Intervention: Clinical Tools and Support Materials from the Zero Overdose*: <http://www.zerooverdose.org/>

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# For the Loved One or Ally

## Instructions

Ask the PWUD to complete the Self-assessment Checklist on **Page 4**. Once they are done, use the information and resources below to engage in a discussion about safety and overdose risk reduction. The table below indicates the level of risk the PWUD is exposed to for each “yes” answer.

<b>Overdose Risk Level</b> <span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> At Risk <span style="color: #A6C9EC;">■</span> Moderate Risk <span style="color: #F4A460;">■</span> High Risk		This column offers helpful information to discuss with the PWUD.	This column includes links to resources you can share with the PWUD when they answer “Yes” to a question.
Questions	Overdose Risk Level	Helpful information	Additional Resources
<b>1.</b> I don’t use dope/heroin, but I do use other street drugs (e.g., coke, crack, stimulants).	At Risk	Fentanyl is increasingly contaminated into other drugs. <b>Drug testing supplies are available.</b>	<span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> <a href="#">Xylazine in the Drug Supply</a> <span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> <a href="#">Drug Checking   DanceSafe</a>
<b>2.</b> I am <b>currently using</b> dope, heroin, fent or tranq.	At Risk	The dope supply is contaminated with other substances. <b>Drug testing supplies are available.</b>	<span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> <a href="#">Xylazine in the Drug Supply</a> <span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> <a href="#">Drug Checking   DanceSafe</a>
<b>3.</b> I often <b>use alone</b> , or I am hiding my use.	High Risk	Using alone makes you more likely to die from an overdose. If you are not able to use with others, the Never Use Alone hotline (877-696-1996) is an option. You can share your location with a volunteer who will stay on the line while you use. If you become unresponsive, the volunteer will call 911 on your behalf.	<span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> <a href="#">Never Use Alone</a>
<b>4.</b> I have recently had a period of time <b>when I used less or stopped my use.</b>	High Risk	Your tolerance level goes down after a period of stopping or slowing your drug use. If your tolerance level has gone down, you are more likely to overdose. Start low and go slow. Consider doing a “test shot” first, <b>trying an alternative method of administration</b> (e.g., snorting as opposed to injecting), and/ or using less to lower your overdose risk.	<span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> <a href="#">Never Use Alone</a> <span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> <a href="#">Naloxone Access</a>
<b>5.</b> I <b>don’t care</b> if I overdose.	High Risk	<b>Are you suicidal? Do you have a plan to harm yourself?</b> If the PWUD answered yes, call a suicide prevention hotline or 911.	<span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> <a href="#">988 Suicide &amp; Crisis Lifeline</a> <span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> <a href="#">Columbia Suicide Risk Scale</a>

Questions	Overdose Risk Level	Helpful information	Additional Resources
6. I have <b>other health problems</b> like hepatitis, asthma, COPD, open wounds.	High Risk	Certain drugs can cause shallow breathing which can trigger asthma. Other medical conditions can also make it more likely to have an overdose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to find low-cost health care in your community</li> <li>Find a CCBHC</li> </ul>
7. I am <b>pregnant</b> or postpartum.	High Risk	There are medical options for pregnant and postpartum women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pregnancy and Substance Use: A Harm Reduction Toolkit</li> </ul>
8. I <b>have overdosed</b> within the last three months.	Moderate Risk	You are more likely to have an overdose if you have recently overdosed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow-Up Care After Drug Overdose</li> </ul>
9. I <b>seek out fentanyl</b> or the strongest dope.	Moderate Risk	Fentanyl is one of the most common drugs involved in overdose deaths. Start low and go slow. Consider doing a “test shot.” Other routes of administration, like smoking or sniffing, could reduce overdose risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fentanyl Use and Overdose Prevention Tips</li> <li>Never Use Alone</li> <li>Naloxone Access</li> </ul>
10. I am <b>mixing</b> dope/heroin and other street drugs.	Moderate Risk	Mixing illicit drugs/street drugs is linked to higher chances of overdose. Consider using one drug at a time and reducing the amount you take.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opioid Overdose Basics: Overdose Risks and Prevention</li> </ul>
11. I <b>use different</b> amounts of drugs, types of drugs or dealers.	Moderate Risk	If possible, being consistent with your drug use is safest, but that is not always possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe(R) Drug Use</li> <li>Getting Off Right</li> </ul>
12. I am currently taking methadone, buprenorphine or some other <b>medication-assisted treatment</b> .	Moderate Risk	While on these medications, your tolerance has gone down. If you were to have a recurrence of illicit use, you are more likely to have an overdose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opioid Overdose Basics: Overdose Risks and Prevention</li> </ul>
13. I do not <b>test my drugs</b> first.	Moderate Risk	Testing your supply gives you more power in deciding how much to use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drug Checking   DanceSafe</li> <li>Checking for Fentanyl</li> </ul>
14. I am <b>injecting</b> substances.	At Risk	Injection increases risk of overdose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe(r) Drug Use 101</li> <li>Getting Off Right</li> </ul>
15. I do not have <b>my basic needs</b> covered, like housing, food, clothing or connection to others.	At Risk	Not having basic needs met can increase the risk for overdose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get Help with Housing Expenses</li> <li>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)</li> </ul>

# Self-Assessment

## Instructions

Please answer these questions about your substance use. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. After you have answered all of the questions, discuss your answers with the loved one or ally who gave you this self-assessment checklist.

	Yes	No
1. I do not use dope/heroin, but I do use other street drugs (e.g., coke, crack, meth). <b>Skip this question if it does not apply to you.</b>		
2. I am currently using dope, heroin, fentanyl or tranq.		
3. I often use alone, or I am hiding my use.		
4. I have recently had a period of time when I used less or stopped my use.		
5. I don't care if I overdose.		
6. I have other health problems like hepatitis, asthma, COPD or open wounds.		
7. I am pregnant or postpartum.		
8. I have overdosed within the last three months.		
9. I seek out fentanyl or the strongest dope.		
10. I am mixing dope/heroin with other street drugs.		
11. I use different amounts of drugs, types of drugs or dealers.		
12. I am currently taking methadone, buprenorphine or some other medication-assisted treatment (MAT).		
13. I do not test my drugs before using them.		
14. I am injecting substances.		
15. I do not have my basic needs covered, like housing, food, clothing or connection to others.		