

Overdose awareness and prevention

August 31 is International Overdose Awareness Day around the world. It's a day focused on increasing awareness and taking action to prevent overdoses.



What is an overdose?

When there's a dangerous level of one or more substances in your body, you may experience an overdose. Even drugs prescribed by your doctor can cause a deadly overdose if you take the wrong amount, take them at the wrong time or mix them with other drugs. An overdose is an emergency that requires urgent medical attention.

What are signs of an overdose?

Overdoses can look different based on the person and the substances they used. Some signs a person may have overdosed can include:¹

- Being unconscious
- Making gurgling noises while sleeping
- Having seizures
- Feeling chest pain
- Having difficulties breathing
- Reporting severe headaches
- Acting paranoid, agitated and/or confused

What should you do if you suspect an overdose?

If you find someone who's unconscious or showing any of the signs mentioned after possibly misusing drugs, intentionally or by accident, call **911**. Never allow someone to "sleep it off" if you suspect an overdose. That could be a fatal decision.

What can we do to curb this tragic problem?

The most important thing you can do is to seek help if you or someone you know is misusing substances. Misuse, dependence and addiction are medical concerns that need medical attention.

Getting help early and finding the right support is the best way to prevent an overdose.

¹[International overdose awareness day](https://www.overdoseday.com/). Available at: [Overdoseday.com](https://www.overdoseday.com/). Accessed May 2025.

For legal disclaimers, visit rfl.com/Disclaimers.