

## Self-care During the COVID-19 Crisis

**IF you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and are 'self-isolating' it is advisable to take your daily methadone in divided doses to reduce the risk of respiratory depression.**

### Taking prescribed medication correctly

**Only take your prescribed medication in line with your prescribed daily dose.** Methadone and Buprenorphine are absorbed by the body at different rates. Taking over the prescribed dose can result in a fatal overdose.

### Other health issues

If you have health problems e.g. COPD; diabetes, cardiovascular disease; heart problems you can be at increased vulnerability to COVID-19. Take a look at the [NHS website](#) for more information. Methadone, heroin also depresses respiratory rate which can increase your risk. If you experience a health emergency, please call 999.

### Mixing sedative drugs

Heroin, methadone, buprenorphine, benzodiazepines (such as diazepam) and alcohol all absorb into the blood stream at different rates. When mixed, they could cause your breathing to stop. Individually, all of these drugs slow breathing. Drug strength/purity can also vary, increasing risk.

### High tolerance

The more you use heroin, the higher your tolerance becomes. The higher your tolerance, the more you need to get a high. The more you use, the closer you are to overdosing.

### Low tolerance

When you stop using heroin, methadone or other opiates, your tolerance drops quite quickly. Starting to use again on the same dose as before could be too much and it could kill you.

### Injecting

The effects are quick and you're more likely to use higher doses as your tolerance increases, so there's more risk of overdose. There's increased risk of infection or complications via injecting.

### Smoking

Smoking is an alternative way to get heroin into your body. You'll get a rush, but have fewer health risks and you're less likely to overdose. There is still a potential risk of combination depressant overdose if heroin is smoked in combination with any other type of depressant taken. Smoking also reduces your lungs' ability to function efficiently which reduces your ability to cope with the symptoms of COVID-19.

### Using other people's drugs

Don't use drugs that haven't been prescribed to you as you could be putting yourself at risk.

### Speed-balling/snowballing

Heroin used in association with crack, either taken at the same time or used as a way to deal with the come down effects is called 'speedballing' or 'snowballing'. Using these two substances together can magnify the effects and be extremely dangerous.

## Keep medication away from children

Keep your medication locked away and out of the reach of children. Even the smallest amount of methadone or buprenorphine can prove fatal to a child.

## Increased depression

Drug and alcohol use can increase depression and feelings of hopelessness, which may lead to more unsafe behaviour.

## Signs of an overdose

Signs can include one or more of the following:

- extremely slow and shallow breathing
- pinpoint pupils
- possibly coma or death
- convulsions
- confusion

**If someone is overdosing use Naloxone before calling 999 for an ambulance.**

### What to do if someone overdoses

1. Stay calm
2. Call 999 and ask for an ambulance
3. Put them in the recovery position
4. Stay with them until the ambulance arrives
5. When the ambulance arrives, tell them what the person has taken, if you can

Following these steps could save their life.

### The recovery position

1. Bend the arm nearest to you, making sure the palm is facing upwards
2. Move the other arm so the back of their hand is against the opposite cheek
3. Bend the leg that's furthest away from you
4. Roll them towards you
5. Tilt their head back and lift their chin

