

# RESPONDING TO OPIOID OVERDOSES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

## How is COVID-19 spread?



COVID-19 spreads via infected droplets.

If you are close to someone (within 6 feet) you could inhale these droplets whether they appear sick (coughing/sneezing) or even if they have no symptoms at all.

If someone sick coughs or sneezes on to a surface, you could touch that surface and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth and get sick.

## What are the risks of responding to an overdose?



Risk: responding to any overdose. If someone has COVID-19, you might not know. People can spread infection before they have symptoms.

High risk: responding to an overdose in someone outside your close contacts. You have probably already been exposed to the germs of people you live and spend lots of time with.

Very high risk: Helping someone to breathe. It creates and spreads infected droplets in the air.

## What can I do to protect myself and the people I care about?



**Call 911 early.**

**You never have to respond to an overdose, perform CPR, or perform rescue breathing.** But we know that this might be impossible, and many of us will choose to respond to an overdose when it is our loved one or community member. Here are some tips to make this safer.

**Avoid giving mouth-to-mouth** wherever possible. This carries a very high risk of contracting COVID-19.

We know that usually giving naloxone (aka Narcan) is the last resort, but in these circumstances **the safest thing to do is immediately give lots of naloxone.** Make sure you have several doses on hand if possible.

**Intramuscular (injection into muscle) naloxone is safer** than intranasal (nasal spray) naloxone when it comes to spreading COVID-19. Intranasal naloxone can expose you to infected droplets in the nose.

**Cover everyone's faces.** Cover the nose and mouth of the person who is overdosing with a medical grade mask if available. Cover your own nose and mouth with a medical grade mask. If no medical grade masks are available, use a homemade mask or scarf or similar.

**Wash your hands and don't touch your face.** Wash them before you respond to an overdose, make sure you never touch your eyes, face, or nose, and wash them really well (30 to 60 seconds using soap and warm water) after responding to an overdose.

**Only give chest compressions if you feel comfortable doing so and are aware of the risks.** Public Health Ontario recommends you wear medical grade eye protection, procedure mask, gloves, and gown to perform chest compressions (CPR without breaths) because it can cause infected droplets to spray out of someone's mouth and nose. In addition to the tips above, consider wearing sun or eyeglasses if available, and remove and wash your clothes immediately afterwards if possible.

Because of the higher risk of getting COVID-19 when responding to an overdose, it is even more important to **avoid physical contact with others for 14 days afterwards.**

*For more information, ask your nurse or doctor, or email us [info@keepingsix.org](mailto:info@keepingsix.org).*

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