

# RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING YOUR LOVED ONE IN RECOVERY

## The Four Major Dimensions of Recovery

### Health

Overcoming or managing one's disease(s) or symptoms, and making informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional well-being.

### Home

Having a stable and safe place to live.

### Purpose

Having meaningful daily activities (a job, school, volunteering, or creative hobbies), and having the independence, income, and resources to participate in society.

### Community

Having relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope.

## How to support someone in recovery

**Educate yourself:** Understanding the science behind substance use disorder shows us why it is so challenging to overcome and how you can support your loved one in a way that is safe and healthy for you both.

**Give encouragement:** Encourage them to attend and stay in treatment.

**Set healthy boundaries:** To continue to help someone in recovery, you'll need to set boundaries. Be clear with your loved one about what you will and will not accept, and make sure your own mental and physical health are respected. Often, the best way to support someone in recovery is to promise unwavering love but be clear that for you to help them, they need to stay sober, honor your boundaries, and get treatment if they relapse.

**Be honest:** If you notice concerning behavior that makes you suspect a return to use, say something.

**Remove stressors:** For many people in recovery, being around substances and other drug stressors can lead to anxiety and be relentlessly tempting.

**Get healthy together:** You can also help someone in recovery by joining them in getting healthy.

**Let go:** While there are many things you can do to provide support to someone in recovery from addiction, it's important to remember that you cannot control the outcome. Don't make the mistake of placing the responsibility of your loved one's recovery on yourself. Ultimately, the responsibility for your loved one's sobriety is all theirs.



## What are the common signs of opioid use disorder?

**Unexplained changes in behavior**, such as:

- Being overly energetic, talking fast, and saying things that don't make sense
- Not bathing, changing clothes, or brushing their teeth
- Eating more or less than usual
- Being very tired and sad
- Sleeping at odd hours
- Being nervous or cranky

**Sudden changes in activities**, such as:

- Mixing with different groups of people or changing friends
- Spending time alone and avoiding time with family and friends
- Losing interest in activities
- Missing important appointments
- Getting into trouble with the law
- Sudden money issues

## What are some signs of opioid use withdrawal?

Withdrawal from opioids can begin hours or days after the last use of the substance. Symptoms often last 4-10 days (methadone withdrawal may last 14-21 days) and usually resolve on their own. Sometimes withdrawal symptoms last longer, for weeks or months.

**Short-term symptoms can include:**

- Dilated pupils.
- Insomnia.
- Vomiting.
- Tremors
- Abdominal pain.
- Diarrhea.
- Feeling cold.
- Drug cravings.
- Anxiety.
- Irritability.

**Possible long-term symptoms include:**

- Anxiety.
- Depression.
- Sleep disturbances.
- Fatigue.
- Loss of focus.
- Irritability.
- Dysphoria (feeling down or unable to feel emotions).

## How to recognize an overdose

An opioid overdose happens when a person takes too much of an opioid or combines opioids with other drugs at a level that is toxic to the body. Sometimes it can be hard to tell if a person who is using opioids is just very high, or actually experiencing a life-threatening overdose. If you are unsure, it is best to assume there is an overdose. Signs of an overdose include:

- Unresponsiveness or unconsciousness.
- Snoring or rattling sounds.
- Small, pinpoint pupils.
- Slowed or stopped breathing.
- Cold or clammy skin.
- Discolored lips or fingernails.

## How to respond to an overdose

**Try to wake the person up.**

**Call 911 right away.** Follow the operator's directions. Tell the 911 operator if the person has slow or stopped breathing.

**Start rescue breathing if the person's breath is slow or has stopped.** Make sure the person's mouth is not blocked, pinch their nose, and breathe into their mouth every five seconds. Continue this for 30 seconds. Need help? Ask the 911 operator for direction and follow their instructions.

**Give naloxone if you have it.** Naloxone is a lifesaving medication that can rapidly reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. It comes as a nasal spray or an injection. Find where to get naloxone at [dhs.wisconsin.gov/naloxone](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/naloxone).

**Nasal spray:**

- Remove the naloxone device from the package.
- Put the tip in either nostril until your fingers touch their nose, then press the plunger.
- Continue rescue breathing if the person's breath is slow or stopped.
- If there is no response after two to three minutes, give naloxone again.
- Continue rescue breathing if the person's breath is slow or stopped.
- Stay with the person and provide care as directed until medical help arrives.

**Injection:**

- Pop off the flip top from the naloxone vial.
- Insert the needle into the vial and draw up 1cc into the syringe.
- Inject the needle straight into muscle (through clothes, if necessary) on the shoulder, thigh, or upper outer part of the buttocks, and then push in plunger.
- Continue rescue breathing if the person's breath is slow or stopped.
- If breathing is not restored after two to three minutes, give another dose of naloxone.
- Continue rescue breathing if the person's breath is slow or stopped.
- Stay with the person and provide care as directed until medical help arrives.

**Put the person in the recovery position.** Once the person is breathing again, put them on their side with their top leg and arm crossed over the body to prevent choking. Stick around and keep an eye on the person until emergency help arrives.

**Help without worrying.** It is safe to help someone experiencing an opioid overdose. You do not need a prescription to use or administer naloxone. You will not be responsible for any outcomes resulting from the delivery of naloxone.

## Additional resources

### 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988

Chat at [988lifeline.org/chat](https://988lifeline.org/chat)

### SAMHSA's National Helpline

Call 800-662-HELP (4357)

### HOPELINE (emotional support service)

Text HOPELINE to 741741

### Wisconsin Addiction Recovery Helpline

Call 211

Text your ZIP code to 898211

Chat at [addictionhelpwi.org](https://addictionhelpwi.org)

### Wisconsin Region Narcotics Anonymous

Call 800-240-0276

### Never Use Alone

Call 877-696-1996

### SafeSpot

Call 800-972-0590



Try to wake them up.



Call 911.



Start rescue breathing.



Give them naloxone.



When breathing again, put them in recovery position. Wait for help.



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT  
of HEALTH SERVICES

P-03594 (10/2025)