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Nobody needs to die from a heroin overdose!

(Four simple rules for survival.)

Don't use alone where nobody is around to see if you overdose! Do your dope with a friend whom you can trust not to abandon you if you get in trouble. And watch out for them too. By the time you know you've overdosed, you can't help yourself. Know the signs of heroin overdose—unresponsiveness, coma, respiratory depression—and don't expect the person to ask for help while they're slipping away.

Sample your drug before injecting the full load! Make sure it's the strength you're use to before emptying the syringe load into your vein. Street drugs are never pure and getting some high-grade heroin can cause an overdose. And know that different users have different tolerances. What is safe for one user can kill another. Smart users inject a little drug and see if it's 'right' before injecting the full load.

Get some Narcan and learn how to use it! Narcotic antagonists like Narcan (naloxone) can quickly reverse the effects of heroin. Narcan needs to be injected soon after breathing stops, before the blood stops circulating in the veins. Narcan can be injected intravenously or in a muscle but it must get in fast. Most people start with a little and increase the dose if the victim doesn't respond within a couple of minutes. (Too much Narcan will bring on severe withdrawal, but that's a whole lot better than dead.) Get proper training before you need to use your Narcan. Keep the Narcan with a clean syringe in your kit ready to be used. And administer rescue breathing while you're waiting for the Narcan to take effect. Never, Never shoot up after taking Narcan!!!

Dial 911 and get professional help fast! Narcan only lasts for a short time. The person can be feeling fine, talking, and moving on but when the Narcan wears off the heroin is still in the body and can knock them back into a coma. Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) carry Narcan and know how to use it to ensure a full recovery from heroin overdose. Remember that the street Narcan was only to *keep the victim alive until the EMTs arrive.*

(And of course, these same rules apply to
OxyContin, morphine, methadone, fentanyl, or any other opiate.)

This information is provided as a public service by the Harm-Reduction Outreach Program, Addiction Research Unit, Department of Psychology, University at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY 14260-4110. No liability is assumed in the distribution of this material—**illicit drug use is never safe, but it can be safer**. Contact information: (716) 645-3650 extension 687, e-mail help@AddictionScience.net, or regular mail to the address listed above. Visit **www.AddictionScience.net** for more information on drug addiction, treatment resources, and harm reduction practices.