

## It gets complicated...

Some opiates are more complicated than others, and present greater risks to your health.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Injecting Fentanyl is dangerous because the medication is not spread equally throughout Fentanyl patches; there is no exact way to measure the amount of medication you could be taking out of it at a time.
- The potency of any batch of heroin is inconsistent, and it is almost always cut with other substances.
- Tylenol (T3's ) and Percocet both contain acetaminophen. When taken in high doses they can have a toxic effect on the body resulting in liver failure. Avoid taking high amounts of acetaminophen.

There are harm reduction supports and treatment options available to people who use opiates. For more information, you can contact:

The Ontario Drug and Alcohol Helpline:  
1-800-565-8603

Breakaway Addiction Services – Satellite  
Opiate Services: (416)-537-9346

Toronto Public Health – The Works:  
(416)-392-0520

CAMH: (416) 595-6111 (within Toronto) or  
1-800-463-6273 (toll free).

Toronto Withdrawal Management Services:  
1-866-366-9513



Reducing Harm  
Enhancing Health

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## Staying Safer When Using Opiates



**An overdose prevention  
resource**

## Not all opiates are created equal

Your tolerance to one opiate will not be the same as with another. Even if you are a regular user of something (ie: oxycontin), you risk an overdose if you use something new or different than what your body is used to at that time.

Not all opiates are the same and your body can react differently because of:

- Drug potency
- How your body breaks down the drugs
- How you take the drug (IV, snorting, chewing, swallowing)
- Whether it's a short or long acting medication
- Interactions with other drugs you have on board
- Your existing tolerance

## Tips for staying safer

### Be careful when switching

When making a change in your pattern of use, you should take the time to find out some information about the new drug you're trying. Information is often available from harm reduction services or public health services. Always consider reducing your use of a new drug by 50%; you can always add more if needed, but can't take it back if you have taken too much.

### Be aware of changes in your tolerance

If you stop or even cut down on opiates, it only takes a few days for your tolerance to drop (ex. time in hospital, detox, or jail). After a few days without opiates like oxycontin, heroin, or methadone, a dose that at one time would have been fine for you to take could now kill you.

### Don't mix your drugs

Mixing opiates with other depressant drugs such as alcohol, benzos, other opiates and many prescription medications increases the risk of overdose.

### Don't use alone

Stay safer by connecting with people you trust and let them know what you're doing and when. If you're using with a friend, take some time to talk about an overdose plan and how you will help each other if something goes wrong.

### Get training

People who use opiates, or spend time with people who do, should connect with their local public health service, needle exchange or doctor to talk about overdose prevention and training. You can get trained in the use and prescription of Naloxone, which is a medication used to help reverse the effects of an opiate overdose.

### Seek out support

Whether you are looking to reduce your use, get some information, safety tips, or access treatment, there's support for you. Getting connected with harm reduction or treatment services greatly reduces the risks you face.