

Sedative Involved Opioid Overdoses

Drugs that cause sedation, such as xylazine, medetomidine, and benzodiazepines, have increasingly been identified as adulterants in the illicit opioid supply. Their sedative effects can complicate overdose response because a person might not “wake up” for as long as 20 minutes after being administered naloxone. Too much naloxone can cause severe withdrawal symptoms, including vomiting and seizures, in an unconscious person.



Administer Naloxone

This will reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. Initiate rescue breathing. If breathing has not resumed after 2-3 minutes, administer a second dose.



Rescue Breathing

If they are NOT breathing, continue rescue breaths and call 911.

Call 911

Tell them there is a person who is not breathing.

Recovery Position

If they are breathing but unconscious, put them into recovery position and monitor them.

How To: Rescue Breathing

- 1) Put the person flat on their back.
- 2) Tilt the chin back, ensuring the airway is clear. If not, clear using two fingers as a hook.
- 3) Pinch their nose and place your mouth over theirs, giving two short and steady breaths. You can use a piece of fabric as a barrier.
- 4) Continue with one breath every five seconds.

Restored breathing, NOT wakefulness, with restored color to eyelids, lips or fingernails, are the most important signs to look for when responding to an overdose where sedative involvement is suspected.

How To: Recovery Position

- 1) Start with the person flat on their back, keeping their left arm and left leg straight.
- 2) Bend their right leg and roll them onto their left side.
- 3) Place their head on the left arm and bend the right arm in front to keep them from rolling over.