Opioid Overdose:
Risk Factors and Prevention Messages

1 — ## Change in Tolerance

Tolerance decreases rapidly after people stop using opioids. Tolerance changes when people leave treatment, prison, and detox.

Prevention: Use less drugs when tolerance is lower. Use a smaller amount or dose to start with.

2 — ## Changing Opioids

All opioids are not created equally. Some are stronger than others.

Prevention: Start with a smaller dose when switching drugs. Does it taste, smell or look different?

3 — ## Unfamiliar Setting

Using in new environments lowers your tolerance and increases your risk of overdosing.

Prevention: Be cautious when using or fixing in a new place. Use a smaller amount or dose to start with.

4 — ## Previous Overdose

If you have overdosed before, you are higher risk for overdose.

Prevention: if you have overdosed previously (or know someone who has overdosed), get a naloxone kit, and get trained in how to use it. Kits are available free of charge without a prescription at participating community pharmacies.

NOVA SCOTIA
TAKE HOME NALOXONE PROGRAM

nova scotia health authority

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5 **Combining or Mixing Drugs**

The more drugs you take, especially with depressant effects like opioids, alcohol and/or benzos, the higher your risk of overdose.

Prevention: Use one drug at a time. Use less of each drug you are using.

6 **IV/Injection Use**

If you use by injection you are higher risk of overdose.

Prevention: Consider other ways to use drugs (switch from IV use to oral/nasal).

7 **Poor Health**

If you have a compromised liver, kidney, and/or breathing conditions you are higher risk for overdose.

Prevention: If using opioids, go slow, take breaks and use less if you are sick.

8 **Using Alone or in a Rural Area**

If you use alone and overdose, no one is there to administer naloxone.

Prevention: Use with friend (but don't share equipment). Advise someone that you are going to use. Have them check in periodically. Leave the door unlocked.

Final Prevention Tip: Always store your naloxone at room temperature and let people know you have a kit and where it is kept!