



Harm Reduction Strategies



What is Harm Reduction?

There are lots of ways to get and stay healthy if you use drugs. If you don't want to quit, or are not sure if you want to quit, harm reduction practices can help. In harm reduction the focus is on "any positive change" and you decide what that means.

Substance Use Disorder Peers

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) peers can help you find treatment, or help you improve your health and quality of life. They also have experience with substance use disorder and are usually in recovery. SUD Peers support you in making positive changes. Locate SUD Peers on the MOUD Locator by following this link: warecoveryhelpline.org/moud-locator/

Syringe Service Programs (SSPs)

Programs can help people who use drugs stay healthy. SSPs provide clean syringes and injection equipment, syringe disposal, naloxone, and access to healthcare. These programs often have free HIV and hepatitis C testing. Find out more about SSPs and find a local site at doh.wa.gov/SSPDirectory.

If you inject drugs there are injection strategies that can reduce your risk of harm. You can read about them here: nextdistro.org/saferinjection

Treatment for Hepatitis C

In Washington State, anyone with Medicaid can get free treatment for hepatitis C. Newer treatments are usually two months long, have no or few side effects, and work — almost everyone who is treated is cured!

To get help accessing treatment visit this website: hepeducation.org/what-we-do/medical-case-management

HIV Testing and Prevention

For locations that offer HIV testing you can search this web address : bit.ly/hiv_testing

There are medications that can prevent HIV before or after a potential exposure. Learn more on the DOH website at: Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) bit.ly/DOH_PREP and PrEP Drug Assistance Program (PrEPDAP) bit.ly/DOH_PREPDAP

Content adapted and linked from the National Harm Reduction Coalition, [UWADAI, stopoverdose.org](http://UWADAI.stopoverdose.org), and WA Department of Health

Want to quit, cut back, or make a change?

There are treatment and support options available in Washington State.

Washington State
Health Care Authority

HCA 13-0377 (12/21)

Lower your risk of dying from an overdose by carrying naloxone

- Tell people where you keep the naloxone
- Learn how to respond to an opioid overdose and share overdose training with friends
- **Instructions for using naloxone** (written) or bit.ly/Naloxone_Instructions
- **Instructions for using naloxone** (video) vimeo.com/357020563
- **Find naloxone near you** or bit.ly/Find_Naloxone

Lower your risk of having an overdose by testing your dose and not using alone

If you use pills or other drugs from the street, the internet, or a friend, you should assume they contain fentanyl. Fentanyl is 50-100x stronger than heroin. Overdose with fentanyl can be fast. If you use any drugs, set safer conditions when possible.

Start low and go slow:

- Use a small amount or tester. If you are using more than one drug, use one drug at a time or use less of each drug.

Use the buddy system:

- If you can, avoid using drugs alone and make sure someone near you has naloxone.
- Have a friend or someone you trust check on you (test, call, or come by)
- Use in a place where someone is more likely to find you if you need help
- Set an alarm or time that other people can hear and will respond to if you overdose
- Use a confidential service like neverusealone.com, by calling (800) 484-3732, or the Brave app

Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)

Opioid use disorder (OUD) is a treatable, long-term medical condition. Medications for opioid use disorder are effective and are a part of recovery for many people. There are three medications approved to treat OUD. See below.

Approved opioid treatment medications		
Buprenorphine	Methadone	Naltrexone
How does it work? Manages cravings and withdrawal symptoms by binding to the opioid receptors	Manages cravings and withdrawal symptoms by binding to the opioid receptors	An opioid blocker, you won't feel the opioids effects. Manages cravings for some people
Does it reduce harm and lower my risk of dying? Based on research that tracked outcomes in the real world Lowers risk of death by about 50%	Lowers risk of death by about 50%	Has not been shown to lower the risk of death
How long does it last and how do I take it? Lasts about 24 hours, usually taken by mouth (implant or injection possible)	Lasts about 24 hours, taken by mouth	Injection lasts for about 28 days. You can't take any opioids for 7-10 days before starting
Where can I get it, and what is the process? Primary care, medical office, community program, and some OTPs Low barrier, same day start options available. Visits vary from daily to monthly and may require scheduled appointments depending on where you go.	Only dispensed at opioid treatment programs (OTPs) Highly structured program, you may need to start going to clinic multiple days each week, but frequency can decrease over time	Prescribed and given by a medical provider and at some OTPs Visits vary from weekly to monthly
Will I need counseling or drug testing? Most providers require urine drug testing, some require counseling.	Requires regular urine drug testing and counseling	Some providers require urine drug testing and counseling

(Adapted from UW ADA) To learn more about these medications, visit: learnabouttreatment.org/
Find medications near you at this website: warecoveryhelpline.org/moud-locator/ or call 1-866-789-1511.