



St. Lawrence County Public Health Department

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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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August 31st is International Overdose Awareness Day

Canton, NY — August 31, 2022 marks the 22nd International Overdose Awareness Day. International Overdose Awareness Day is about remembering the loved ones we have lost and acknowledging the grief of family and friends left behind. It is also about raising awareness around opioid overdose and poisoning, which is one of the world's worst public health crises especially overdoses involving opioids, including illegally manufactured Fentanyl (IMF).

There are two types of fentanyl: pharmaceutical fentanyl and illicitly manufactured fentanyl. Both are considered synthetic opioids. Illicitly manufactured fentanyl is distributed through illegal drug markets for its heroin-like effect. It is often added to other drugs because of its extreme potency, which makes drugs cheaper, more powerful, more addictive, and more dangerous. Drugs may contain deadly levels of fentanyl and you wouldn't be able to see it, taste it, or smell it. It is nearly impossible to tell if drugs have been laced with fentanyl. **NO DRUG IS SAFE.**

A range of signs and symptoms can occur when a person overdoses or is poisoned, and everyone responds differently. Signs and symptoms depend on a variety of factors including which drug is taken, the amount taken and the person's state of health at the time. If you can't get a response from someone, do not assume they are asleep. Sometimes it can take hours for someone who has overdosed to die.

Signs of an Opioid Overdose include:

- Small, constricted "pinpoint pupils"
- Falling asleep or losing consciousness
- Slow, weak, or no breathing
- Choking or gurgling sounds
- Limp body
- Cold and/or clammy skin
- Discolored skin (especially in lips and nails)

Seeking emergency help isn't just for when someone is unconscious. You should also seek emergency help when someone is:



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- Having a seizure.
- Experiencing severe headache.
- Experiencing chest pain.
- Experiencing breathing difficulties.
- Extremely paranoid, agitated and/or confused.

It is not necessary for someone to have all of these signs or symptoms for them to be overdosing. Exhibiting one or two could still mean they are in trouble and need emergency help. If you aren't sure, treat it like an overdose - you could save a life.

If you think someone is overdosing:

- **Call 911 Immediately.** New York State's Good Samaritan Law allows people to call 911 without fear of getting arrested if they are having a drug/alcohol overdose, or if they witness someone overdosing. Don't run, Dial 911.
- **Administer Narcan,** if available. Narcan is a life-saving medication that can reverse the effects of opioid overdose including Fentanyl. Narcan is available for free. For more information on how to get Narcan, visit St. Lawrence County Addiction Services at stlawco.org/Departments/CommunityServices.
- Try to keep the person awake and breathing.
- Lay the person on their side to prevent choking.
- Stay with the person until emergency assistance arrives.

For the first time in our nation's history, over 100,000 Americans have died of drug overdose (2020-2021). Fentanyl deaths are projected to double in the year ahead. Overdoses can affect anyone and it is important that everyone be prepared to respond. Carry Narcan and don't be afraid to call 911. You might save a life.

For more information on the Good Samaritan Law, please visit New York State Department of Health (<https://on.ny.gov/3ADCp0w>) or for more information on overdose, visit the CDC Stop Overdose website (<https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/index.html>).

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