



Signs of Opioid Overdose

Signs of OVERDOSE, which often result in death if not treated, include:

- Face is extremely pale and/or clammy to the touch
- The body is limp
- Extreme sleepiness, inability to be awakened or is unable to speak
- Breathing problems that can range from slow to shallow breathing
- The person is vomiting or making gurgling noises
- Fingernails or lips turning blue/purple
- Extremely small “pinpoint” pupils
- Slow or stopped heartbeat and/or low blood pressure

Signs of OVERMEDICATION, which may progress to overdose, include:

- Unusual sleepiness, drowsiness or difficulty staying awake, despite loud verbal stimulus or vigorous sternal rub
- Mental confusion, slurred speech, intoxicated behavior
- Slow or shallow breathing
- Extremely small “pinpoint” pupils, although normal size pupils do not exclude opioid overdose
- Slow heartbeat, low blood pressure
- Difficulty waking the person from sleep

Because opioids depress respiratory function and breathing, one telltale sign of a person in a critical medical state is the “death rattle.” If a person emits a “death rattle” – an exhaled breath with a very distinct, labored sound coming from the throat – emergency resuscitation will be necessary immediately, as such a sound almost always is a sign that the individual is near death.

Reference: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2016 ,
www.store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA16-4742/SMA16-4742.pdf