



Know the Signs of Overdose



Iris Rawlings has been an Emergency Department Nurse at CPDMH for more than 20 years. She says the job is always changing and there's always something new to learn.

Unfortunately, one of things that is changing relates to overdoses. "We are seeing more," says Iris. "It's a different world and we really want to focus on prevention and ensuring people have the information they need." August 31st is International Overdose Awareness Day and provides an opportunity to do just that.

An overdose means having more of a drug (or combination of drugs) than your body can cope with. There are a number of signs and symptoms that show someone has overdosed, and these differ with the type of drug used.

"Behind every overdose is a story. We need to listen. Only when we know their story and what has happened, can we help them," explains Iris.

Overdoses can be caused by street drugs such as Fentanyl. "Often one drug is laced with something else and friends don't know what to do. They need to seek help immediately," stresses Iris.

Overdoses can also be a cry for help. "If you are feeling overwhelmed, come to Emergency before you put something in your mouth," she says.

Overdoses can even happen when prescription medications are used incorrectly. Iris notes it's important to know the right amount and the right time to take your medication and what drugs should not be mixed. And sometimes overdoses are accidental such as when children swallow detergent pods.

"We have great relationships with local paramedics, the OPP and Lanark County Mental Health," sums up Iris. "Together, we want people to know that we are here to help and keep you safe."

**#END
OVERDOSE**

An overdose is a medical emergency that requires immediate medical attention. Always call an ambulance if you suspect someone has overdosed.

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.

Seeking emergency help isn't just for when someone is unconscious. Seek help if someone is having a seizure; experiencing severe headaches, chest pain or breathing difficulties; or is extremely paranoid, agitated and/or confused.