

PHILLY HELP BOOK

an overdose prevention guide



Learn about overdose

Stay safe, know the risks

Get help for yourself or a loved one

Find local resources



Overdose Response Unit
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Updated Summer 2026

In 2024, 1,069 people died of overdose in Philly.

What is an overdose?

An overdose happens when a drug or combination of drugs overwhelms a person's body.

Overdoses can happen with many substances, including:

- opioids such as heroin and fentanyl
- stimulants such as cocaine
- or a combination of more than one substance.

When experiencing an overdose, a person may become unresponsive or have trouble breathing. Like a poisoning, an overdose can result in death.

In Philadelphia from 2023-2024, overdose deaths **decreased by 27%** in the Black population, **decreased by 26%** in the Hispanic population, and **decreased by 4%** in the White population.

What's happening in Philly?

The drug supply in Philadelphia has become more unpredictable than ever before.

This means that many people may not know what they are actually using or how strong it is. The change in the drug supply makes drug use more dangerous than it was in the past.

Lower the risk of an overdose:

- Use fentanyl test strips on all substances
- Start with a small dose and go slowly
- Try not to use alone
- Avoid mixing drugs
- Have naloxone on hand and ready



Scan this QR code to learn how to use fentanyl test strips.

Most overdose deaths in Philadelphia take place inside the home.

Carry **naloxone** and know how to use it.

Signs of an overdose

- Irregular heartbeat
- Slow, shallow or stopped breathing
- Not responding to your voice or touch
- Lips or nails are very pale, blue-ish purple, or gray for darker skin

What to do if you think someone is overdosing

1. Call 911 immediately.
2. Administer naloxone if available.
3. Try to keep the person awake & breathing.
4. Lay the person on their side to prevent them from choking.
5. Stay with the person until emergency assistance arrives.

What is naloxone?

Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose and save someone's life.

Naloxone temporarily blocks the effects of opioids, helping a person breathe again.

Narcan® is a well-known brand of naloxone.

Naloxone is safe to use and it won't hurt someone if they're on a different drug. It takes 2–5 minutes to take effect and may require more than one dose. Narcan is not addictive and cannot be used to get high.

How to use naloxone



Scan this QR code to learn how to use naloxone.

The most important thing Philadelphians can do to stop overdoses is to carry naloxone and know how to use it.



Visit **[substanceusephilly.com/get-supplies](https://www.substanceusephilly.com/get-supplies)** to get naloxone and other supplies.

Substance Use and Addiction

What is substance use?

Substance use refers to any use of drugs. This includes legal drugs and illegal drugs. It may include mild, moderate, or severe substance use disorder as well as recreational drug use.

Why do people use substances?

- **To feel good.** Some people use drugs for the positive feelings that come with it.
- **To feel better.** Some people use drugs to help with negative feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, or drug withdrawal.
- **To do better.** Some people use drugs because they believe it makes them perform better at school, work, or sports.
- **Curiosity and social pressure.** Some people, especially young people, may try drugs because they are curious or to fit in with friends.

What is addiction?

Addiction is when a person feels unable to stop using a substance, even if it leads to negative effects on their health, relationships, or daily life.

What is substance use disorder?

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a medical diagnosis where a person has difficulty controlling their use of alcohol or drugs, even when it causes problems with their health and day-to-day life.

Common Substances

Opioids

What are opioids?

Opioids are a class of drugs used to control pain.

- **Prescription pain relievers** like:

OxyContin (oxy), Percocet (percs), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), hydrocodone (Vicodin), morphine.

- **Street drugs** like heroin and fentanyl (fetty)
- **Medications used in treatment** like methadone and buprenorphine

Opioids can be used to relieve pain and make people feel relaxed and happy. They can also have harmful side effects like: drowsiness, confusion, nausea, constipation, slowed breathing.

Taking too much of any opioid can cause an opioid overdose, which can be deadly if not addressed immediately (see page 3).

What happens if different drugs are mixed?

Mixing different types of drugs can make it harder to predict the effects and can put someone at a higher risk of overdose.

In Philadelphia in 2024, 50% of all overdose deaths involved opioids and stimulants.

Common Substances

Stimulants

What are stimulants?

Stimulants are a class of drugs that make a person feel more alert by speeding up the messages traveling between the brain and body. Stimulants are also called “uppers”.

- **Street drugs** such as cocaine (crack), amphetamines (speed) and meth.
- **Caffeine and nicotine**

What is overamping?

Overamping is when your body or mind has a bad reaction to using a stimulant. Overamping can feel different to each person, but can include: feeling panicked or scared (paranoia), nausea/vomiting, shaking or trembling (tremors), severe headaches.

What to do in a non-emergency:

Hydrate, cool down with a cool or warm shower, change your environment, eat something.

Call 911 if someone is experiencing signs of:

Heart attack, stroke, seizure, hallucinations or delusions, body temperature above 104° F.

Stimulants have become more common. In 2024, stimulants were detected in 70% of all overdose deaths in Philadelphia.



Starting the Journey

What is recovery and what could that look like for me?

Recovery is a process of change that may let individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self directed life, and reach their full potential.

Recovery looks different for everyone. There is no “one size fits all” solution.

What treatment options are available?

Residential and hospital stay:

If your assessment shows you'd benefit from staying at a hospital or inpatient program, the behavioral health professional you met with will contact your insurance to get approval and find a program that meets your needs.

Outpatient treatment:

Many people recover from substance use disorders without needing to stay at a hospital or medical facility. During outpatient treatment, you can visit a behavioral health professional to access the services and medication you may need. The goal is to build coping skills when dealing with cravings.

Getting Care

How to find treatment

- **Call the National Help Line 800-662-4347** for treatment referrals and information.
- **Call CBH Member Services at 888-545-2600** to get help treating a drug and/or alcohol addiction.
- **If you don't have insurance**, call Behavioral Health Special Initiative (BHSI) at **215-546-1200**.
- **Visit findtreatment.gov** to find a provider near you.

What to expect

Treatment begins with an assessment.

Before going into treatment, you will need an assessment. You will meet with a behavioral health professional to help figure out what kind of treatment you need.

Where to go for an assessment

- **Einstein Medical Center (Germantown)**
5501 Old York Road, 215-951-8300
- **Friends Hospital (Northeast)**
4641 Roosevelt Blvd., 215-831-2600
- **Pennsylvania Hospital (Center City/South)**
801 Spruce St., 215-829-5433
- **Temple/Episcopal (North)**
100 E. Lehigh Ave., 215-707-2577
- **Hospital of UPenn (West)**
501 S. 54th St., 215-748-9000
- **Kensington Wellness Support Center (Kensington)**
265 E. Lehigh Ave., 267-209-1606

Trauma

What is trauma?

Trauma is an emotional response to a harmful event. Trauma can occur from a single experience or series of events that you experience as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening.

Left untreated, trauma can have lasting and negative effects on your social, mental and spiritual well-being.

Where can I find support for trauma?

- **Call DBH Member Services at 888-545-2600.** Ask about trauma-focused therapy.
- **Call Children's Crisis Treatment Center at 215-496-0707** for children aged 13 and younger.
- **Talk to a trusted friend or relative.**
- **Visit [DBHIDS.org/BOOST](https://www.dbhids.org/BOOST)** for more resources.

What if trauma affects my community?

If your community has recently had a stressful experience including violence, loss, accidents, fires or any changes, call the **Network of Neighbors at 267-233-4867** or the **Office of Safe Neighborhoods at 215-686-0789** for support.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

What is mental health?

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables us to cope with the stresses of life, realize our abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to our community.

If you or someone you love is in emotional distress

Call 988 or 215-685-6440 if you or a loved one is experiencing a mental health crisis, having thoughts of suicide, or struggling with substance use.

Websites to Visit

HealthyMindsPhilly.org

For online screenings and to learn how to give Mental Health First Aid, and other events.

CBHPhilly.org

To find mental health and/or substance use services online for Medicaid patients.

DBHIDS.org/BOOST

For more resources.

NUMBERS TO KNOW

Important numbers and hotlines to call

Emergency

Call 911 immediately in an emergency or if your safety is in immediate danger. If you believe someone is experiencing an overdose, call 911 and wait for EMS to arrive.

Call or text 988 if you or someone is experiencing a mental health crisis, struggling with substance use, or having thoughts of suicide. The Philadelphia Crisis Line is available 24/7 for mental health support and suicide prevention.

Call or text 211 for real-time support related to gun violence prevention and to access resources and services for yourself and your neighborhood.

Call 1-866-723-3014 if you or someone you know is experiencing intimate partner violence at home. The Philadelphia Domestic Violence Hotline provides crisis intervention, safety planning, resources, and referrals. Hotline counselors can help connect you with free services in Philly.

Housing

- **24/7 Homeless Outreach** Call 215-232-1984 you or someone else needs shelter anytime day or night.
- **Emergency Shelter Assistance** Call 215-686-7175 to speak with the Office of Homeless Services

- **Eviction Prevention** Call Philly Tenant Hotline at 267-443-2500 to learn more about tenant rights if you are facing eviction.
- **Home Repair** Call 215-448-2160 to speak with the Phila. Division of Housing and Community Development for help with basic repairs.
- **Utility Shut-off Assistance** Call 215-972-5170 to see if you are eligible for money from the Utility Emergency Services Fund.
- **Gas Heating Bill** Call LIHEAP at 866-857-7095 for help with your gas bill.
- **Affordable Housing** Visit pahousingsearch.com to search affordable apartments in Philadelphia.
- **Rental Assistance Programs** Visit rentassistance.us.

Health

- **Philadelphia Crisis Line** Call or text 988 for support with a mental health crisis and suicide prevention. Visit 988lifeline.org/chat to message a counselor.
- **Community Behavioral Health** Call 888-545-2600 for mental health and substance use treatment services for Philadelphians with Medicaid.
- **Behavioral Health Services** Call 215-599-2150 to learn if you qualify for mental health and addiction services with the Targeted Case Management Unit.

- **BHSI Substance Use Treatment** If you have limited or no insurance, call Behavioral Health Special Initiative at 215-546-1200 for treatment options
- **Free Grief and Loss Support** Call 215-685-7408 or 215-685-7411
- **Domestic Violence Hotline** Call 866-723-3014 to speak with a counselor.
- **Medical Assistance and Insurance** To apply for public insurance, call Medicaid at 215-560-7226, CBH Member Services at 888-545-2600, or apply online at [compass.state.pa.](https://compass.state.pa.gov/)
- **City Health Center** Find a health center near you at www.phila.gov/services/mentalphysical-health/city-health-centers.
- **PHMC Dental** Call 215-309-6223 for virtual telehealth and emergency dental services.
- **Medical and Dental Services** Call 215-320-6187 to schedule an appointment at a Stephen Klein Wellness Center.
- **Children's Resources** Call 215-836-0958 or visit Cradles to Crayons at 4700 Wissahickon Ave., Suite 142, Phila., PA 19144.

Food

- **Free Food** Visit [phila.gov/food](https://www.phila.gov/food) to find free groceries and meals near you. No ID is required.
- **Food Pantries** Call 311 or the Coalition Against Hunger at 1800-5HUNGRY for hot meals and food assistance in your area.

- **Older Adult Meal Sites** Call 215-765-9040 the Phila. Corporation for Aging to reserve 5 to 7 free meals per week.
- **SNAP Hotline** Call 215-430-0556 to apply for food stamps and other benefits.
- **Free Grocery Delivery** Visit amazon.com/snap-ebt for free grocery delivery and sign up with your EBT card.

Transportation

- **Medical Assistance Transportation** - Call Modivcare at 877-835-7436 for transportation to appointments for people with Medicaid.
- **Medical Appointment Transportation** Call 215-580-7145 to get rides to medical appointments or help with costs.
- **Paratransit Services** Call SEPTA at 888-545-2600 for the Share-Ride program and information on paratransit services.
- **Transportation Access Programs** Visit lyft.com/lyftup to get rides to the things you need like groceries, jobs, voting, and vaccines.

Re-entry

- **Division of Reentry** Call 215-683-3370 to connect with reentry services near you, or visit in person at 1425 Arch St, Mon-Fri, 9:30am-4:30pm.
- **If you started suboxone in jail**, call Action Wellness at 215-981-0088 and ask to speak to a LEAP Staffer. Assistance finding a provider and more. You do not need to stop using drugs to participate in the program.

Benefits

- **BenePhilly** To enroll in public benefits, including Medicaid, Social Security Disability, and Child Tax Credit, call 833-373-5868 or visit phila.gov/programs/benephilly.
- **Campaign for Working Families** Call 215-454-6483 for free help doing your taxes.
- **Philadelphia Legal Assistance Hotline** For help filing unemployment compensation, tax issues, or other issues, call 215-981-3800.
- **Community Legal Services** Call 215-981-3700 for legal help related to benefits, including SSI.

Harm reduction

- **Find free naloxone** at a Philadelphia fire station.
- **Get free fentanyl test strips and other supplies.** Visit substanceusephilly.com/get-supplies.
- **Take a free training course.** Check the SUPHR event schedule and sign up for a training at substanceusephilly.com/events.
- **If you are using drugs alone**, call SafeSpot at 800-972-0590 to connect with a trained operator who can call for help in case of overdose.

Additional Resources

- **Find Help** Visit findhelp.org to search for food, utilities, transportation, and more.
- **Where to Turn Guide** Visit projecthome.org/where-to-turn to find a list of resources for people experiencing homelessness on health and safety, benefits, legal assistance, and more.



Office of
Public Safety