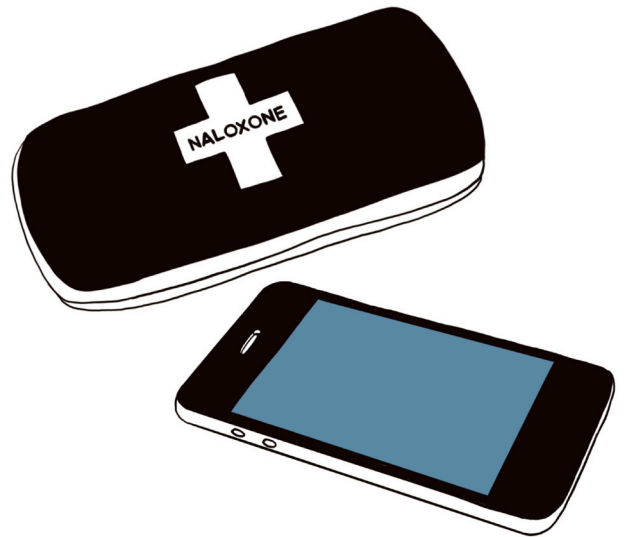


Walking a Safe Path: Tools and Tips for Safer Substance Use

People use substances for a variety of different reasons. Regardless of the type of substance you are using or why you are using, **it is important to do it safely and reduce the risk of harm to yourself and others.**

Planning ahead

- If this is your first time trying alcohol or other drugs, use in a place where you feel safe
- Have someone that you trust and can reach out to for support or questions - this could be a friend, parent, sibling, auntie, uncle, cousin, or neighbour
- Try to use when you are in a good mental state
- Use the buddy system and use near someone you know well and trust
- Have a plan for how you will get home safely or leave early if you want to
- To reduce the risk of infections, look up needle exchange or safe injection sites in your area where you can get clean supplies
- Make sure you or others around you have a **naloxone kit** - this is a free medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose and allow time for help to arrive. Visit your nearest pharmacy to pick up a free naloxone kit

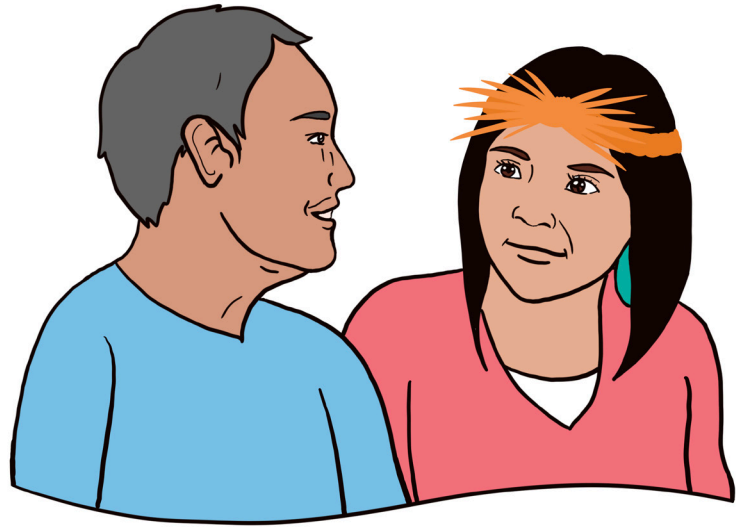


In the moment

- Start with a smaller amount and wait to see how you feel before you decide if you want to use more, and if so, do so slowly and carefully, checking in with yourself regularly
- Be careful when combining alcohol and other drugs - this can increase the effect each substance has on your body and mental state
- Don't take substances from someone you don't know or leave your things unattended
- Stay hydrated and drink water while you are using
- It's okay to say no to situations you are not comfortable with, like using drugs or physical relationships. Saying no isn't offensive - it is just "no"
- Check in with your friends and look out for each other
- It's okay to leave the situation or reach out to a person you can trust for support
- **If someone needs help or is overdosing, call 911** - there are laws that will give you some legal protection, like the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act*

Supporting our wellness every day

- Balance time spent using alcohol or other drugs by blocking off time to do enjoyable activities in your life (e.g., spending time on the land, beading, painting, drumming, reading, listening to Elders' stories)
- If you find that your well-being, relationships, or daily routine are being negatively affected by drinking alcohol or using substances, reach out to someone you trust for help
- Whether or not you are using alcohol or other drugs, you can learn from cultural teachings, use traditional medicine and participate in ceremony. Talk to an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or traditional teacher to find out more



There is always more help out there if you need it. If you're struggling with your well-being or substance use, try to reach out and talk to someone you trust. **Share how you're feeling or what you're struggling with.**

If you're having trouble reaching out, try to connect with a helpline. Some resources include the **Hope for Wellness Helpline (1 855-242-3310)**, or the chat box at www.HopeforWellness.ca where you can speak with a counsellor online.

This resource was developed by a team of experts, including young people and a Knowledge Keeper, with support from Indspire, Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario and Shkaabe Makwa at CAMH.



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