



A Prevention Checklist for Employees

We all have a lot on our minds as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased levels of stress, uncertainty and anxiety can also potentially lead to an increase in substance misuse or substance use disorders, or an increased risk for relapse for those already in treatment or recovery. Here are some steps you can take to be prepared and prevent this from occurring.

Medication Safety

- It can be easy to lose track of your medications – if you have opioids in the house, ensure they are safely stored and that you are keeping track of how many pills you should have to prevent any sort of diversion.
- Having more medications than usual, or new medications, can lead to unexpected medication interactions. Always keep track of your medications and pay attention to new symptoms after starting new medications.
- If you are prescribed an opioid for chronic use and you are unable to refill your prescription as needed, you may experience withdrawal symptoms. This can happen to anyone whose body has become dependent on opioids. Dependence is not the same as having an opioid use disorder. Withdrawal symptoms can be very unpleasant, including extreme anxiety, restlessness, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, and bone and muscle pain. Though the most intense of these symptoms go away after 24–72 hours, some symptoms, such as anxiety and insomnia, can linger for months.¹ If you are concerned, contact your medical team.
- If you run out of opioid medications, do not take someone else's medications. Not all opioid medications are created the same – even if you are taking the same physical amount, they can impact your body differently. Doing so can also increase your risk for overdose.
- Similarly, opioid tolerance drops quickly after use has been discontinued.² Your normal dose may be too high when you start taking your medications again, even if it has only been a few days. Stay in close contact with your medical team during all medication transitions and changes.
- If you have excess medication that you are unable to dispose of promptly, safely and appropriately, keep them locked up and know how many you have left.

¹ https://www.elsevier.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/537031/opioid-withdrawal-ClinicalKey.pdf

² <https://harmreduction.org/issues/overdose-prevention/overview/overdose-basics/opioid-od-risks-prevention/tolerance/>

Support Your Friends and Family

- Learn what's available in your community – familiarize yourself with community resources for friends or family who may be struggling
- Let people know you are there for them – learn more about stigma and how you can help in [Understanding Stigma](#)