

# Overamping

Have you ever felt too uncomfortable or weird (not in a nice way) after taking stims? You could have been **“overamping.”** Stimulants like crack/cocaine and meth can lead to side effects that are unwanted and uncomfortable or potentially dangerous. Knowing what it is and what to do can help you be prepared if it happens.

## What is overamping?

Overamping happens when the effects of a stimulant become overwhelming, distressing, and/or dangerous. Overamping is specific to “overdosing” on stims like crack, cocaine, or meth. Using the word “overamping” helps to differentiate from an opioid overdose since they are different in how it happens, how it appears, and how to respond.

## So “overamping” means overdose?

Yes, but it may not be what you think. Overdose means taking too much of something (usually a drug) and having an unwanted reaction or effect

- When people talk about overdose, they are usually talking about respiratory depression. Respiratory depression is usually caused by opioids or by mixing benzos with alcohol or opioids or any combination of the three drugs.
- It’s important to know that you can “overdose” on stims but it feels and looks different.
- Overamping is different because it can be a really uncomfortable mental experience but it isn’t usually life-threatening.
- There is no “antidote” like Naloxone available to reverse it.

## Causes of overamping

1. Higher doses than you’re used to
2. Lower tolerances make it easier to overamp, start low go slow
3. Lack of sleep, especially multiple days of little to no sleep
4. Using multiple days in a row, especially without sleeping
5. Your setting or environment could increase the chance of overamping
  - The chance of overamping may be more likely at a strangers house compared to a safe place with a trusted friend.
6. The way you take the drug (smoke, inject, eat, snort, booty bump, etc)
  - If you notice that you feel more uncomfortable when you inject versus smoking, changing the way you use can make a difference.
7. Physical health
  - If you are sick, your body may not handle drugs like it normally does/can.
  - Endocarditis can put you at higher risk for a

medical emergency like a heart attack because of the intense strain on the heart.

## Symptoms of overamping

### Mental Symptoms

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Confusion                | Extreme Paranoia         |
| Restlessness             | Extreme Agitation        |
| Hypervigilance           | Increased Aggressiveness |
| Intense Panic            | Suicidal Ideation        |
| Hallucinations/delusions |                          |

### Physical Symptoms

- |                       |                                   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Jerking movements     | Passing out (but still breathing) |
| Unable to stay still  | Uncontrollable teeth grinding     |
| Chest pain            | Fast, racing heart                |
| Irregular breathing   |                                   |
| High body temperature |                                   |

Listen to your body. It’s okay if you start feeling any of these effects. Noticing and naming them can be the first step to helping you get the help and support.

## Tips for Prevention

- Sleep: Lack of sleep increases the chance of overamping because even without drugs, little to no sleep can make you feel really unwell.
- Take Breaks: If you’ve been using for a few days, take a break where you can take care of yourself (sleep, eat, shower).
- Stay Hydrated and Eat: Drinking plenty of fluids and eating meals can help your body feel better overall
- Location: If you’re using somewhere new or with new people, reducing your dose and taking it slow can make it easier to check in with yourself about how you feel.
- Limit combos: combining stims or with other drugs can change the effects of each individual drug.
- Pay attention to your dose! If you have a scale, weighing out your stuff can help you notice if there is a dose that makes you uncomfortable.
  - Remember, the drug supply is often unreliable and potency can change from batch to batch, seller to seller, city to city. The same dose can feel different; starting low and slow with a new batch can help you safely gauge



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how a dose affects you.

- Take overall care of your body, however you can.

You may not always know if you might overamp but it can happen. Unless there is a serious medical emergency happening, overamping will pass.

## Responding to overamping

### 1. Recognize Overamping

- This may be recognizing it in yourself or if you have a friend experiencing symptoms, ask them if they feel like they may be overamping.
  - If your friend says no, you can ask again in a bit but don't force or pressure anyone to talk about it. Sometimes, offering a glass of water and some quiet can be enough.

### 2. Assess Overamping

- What symptoms are happening? Is there a life threatening emergency or is support enough?

### 3. Find emergency care or provide opportunities for support and rest

- If there isn't a stroke or heart attack or any other serious medical emergency happening, **support and rest will be the best option for you or your friend.**

## What's the difference between a non-emergency and an emergency?

### When its a non-emergency

Confusion  
Restlessness  
Hypervigilance  
Intense Panic  
Hallucinations/delusions  
Extreme Paranoia  
Extreme Agitation  
Increased Aggressiveness  
Suicidal Ideation (no action)

### When its a medical emergency (CALL 911)

Heart attack (crushing chest pain, worse pain with movement, intense sweating)  
Seizure  
Overheating with body temp over 104 degrees  
Stroke (numbness or inability to move one part of body, facial droop, inability to speak)  
Loss of contact with reality (psychosis); in some specific rare cases

## When to call 911 for a life-threatening emergency: Stroke

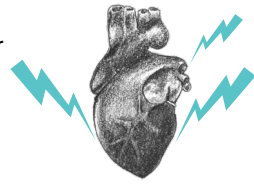
Strokes happen *very quickly*. They happen when a blood clot blocks the blood from moving in the body and when there is bleeding in the brain.

### SIGNS OF A STROKE:

- Extremely slurred words
- Droopy and numb face
- Sudden numbness on one side of the body
- Can't move their face on one side

## Heart Attack

Heart attacks look very similar no matter what the cause of it was. It can be hard to tell if a heart attack is happening sometimes. If you see some of these signs happen at the same time or your friend has a heart condition, call 911 immediately.



### SIGNS OF A HEART ATTACK:

- Difficult breathing & Cold Sweat
- Squeezing, pressure, or pain in the chest
- Lightheadedness/dizziness
- Pain, pressure, & tightness in the neck, shoulders, jaw, or back
- If someone is passed out and not breathing, do CPR if you are trained.

## Overheating

Overheating is dangerous. Just like a very high fever, an extremely high body temperature for long periods of time can cause organ failure and brain damage.



### SIGNS OF OVERHEATING:

- Body temp over 104 degrees fahrenheit
- Passed out or confused
- Fast heart rate and breathing

Cool towels or air can help manage temperature but don't always take away the need for medical help in a severe emergency.

## Seizures

If a seizure happens, stay calm and make sure you move anything that can hurt them out of their way (chairs, tables, etc). Keep an eye on them in case they start choking or vomiting. DO NOT try to restrain the person & DO NOT force anything into their mouth.

Seizures are an emergency if it's the first time it's ever happened OR multiple keep happening back to back.

### SIGNS OF SEIZURES:

- Uncontrollable body jerking, twitching, & movement.
- Drooling/frothing at the mouth
- Sudden falling/loss of consciousness
- Loss of bladder control

## Psychosis

Psychosis where someone is trying to hurt themselves or someone else is *extremely rare*. Loss of contact with reality will not need medical care or be dangerous most of the time. Psychosis will usually subside after a few hours but it may take longer for some people. If you or someone else is in immediate danger (like using a knife to hurt you/themselves), paramedics can help. Unfortunately, there is a higher chance that the police will show up.



## Calling 9-1-1 during a Medical Emergency

**How to call 9-1-1:** State the actual negative effect, not overamping/overdosing. You can say “my friend is having multiple seizures and they need help”. Tell paramedics what drug they took when they arrive. Hopefully this way, we can lower the chance of the police showing up.

**Good Samaritan Policies:** These policies protect the person who called for help from being arrested. It can be different state to state so it’s important to be aware of the Good Samaritan policies in your area. You can check some out here: [nextdistro.org/policies](http://nextdistro.org/policies)

We know that EMTs, health care providers, and police can be very stigmatizing towards PWUD. It makes sense that you may feel unsure about calling but certain situations do need special medical care. If you must leave, wait until the paramedics arrive to at least make sure help gets to your friend.

## Responding to Non-Emergency

Anxiety and mental discomfort are common while overamping. While these steps won’t always take away these uncomfortable feelings, it can help manage the discomfort as the drug wears off with time.



### Overall comfort

- **Cool down:** ice packs or a cool towel under armpits and knees; use a fan
- This can be really helpful to prevent overheating
- **Hydration:** Drink some water or sports drink like gatorade
  - Avoid drinks with caffeine that can increase intensity of the drug
    - Drink water with electrolytes if you can (Gatorade, etc.); alternatives are salty foods or a small amount of salt mixed in to your water (all will help your body systems stay balanced and replenish nutrients)
  - **Rest:** Take a nap, close your eyes, or simply lay/sit down somewhere comfy.
  - **Shower:** A cool or warm shower can help bring some physical and mental relief.
- **Change environment:** move to a more comfortable place or take a walk
- **Breathing or meditation exercises**
- **Physical contact:** massage yourself or ask someone else.
- **Eat some food.** The easier to eat the better.



You don’t have to sit through your discomfort. Some might help you better than others at different times but it’s worth trying.

### Supplements

- L-Theanine: help reduce anxiety in some people
- Magnesium: help reduce jaw clenching and muscle tension
  - Try using magnesium glycinate or gluconate since they are less harsh on your stomach than other types of magnesium.

## Will benzos like xanax help?

They can be good landing gear for some folks but there’s no guarantee that what you have is not cut with anything else if you bought it on the street or off someone else. If you’ve already taken benzos or another downer like heroin or alcohol, taking benzos may raise the risk for more serious complications like respiratory depression (stop breathing). Knowing this can help avoid a serious emergency if other downers were used that day.

If you decide to use benzos to help with the unwanted effects of overamping, start with a low dose. Benzos can relieve some of these unwanted effects but, like with any drug, should be used with caution.

While they can be really useful in a regular stim comedown, frequent & daily long-term benzo use can lead to seizures if you stop using suddenly. It’s helpful for some folks to know that like any drug, benzos can be habit-forming and lead to dependence.

Take note if any warning signs develop like unresponsiveness or confusion with difficult, shallow breathing after using benzos.

## After Care

You may find yourself feeling extremely tired, exhausted, confused, and even sad. It’s not easy coming off an uncomfortable and unwanted experience. Give yourself some time to rest after it has worn off and check in with yourself about how you feel.

- Take a shower
- Eat a good meal (give you some energy & strength)
- Stay hydrated (avoid drinks with caffeine)
- Take some supplements like L-theanine and magnesium glycinate or gluconate.
  - Some people may experience diarrhea after taking some types of magnesium.
- Take herbal tinctures/supplements for help falling asleep: skullcap, valerian, kava, chamomile, passionflower, etc.
  - \* Take care when taking supplements since they can interact with some medications. If you have access to a doctor, ask them if these supplements are okay to take with your medications \*

*\*Some supplements may work better for some people than others. These are just some recommendations. Eating a good meal, some rest, and a shower are just as good to get you feeling better.*

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**For more information & resources about drug overdose, visit:**

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