

Living Well with AIMGA

VOL. 8 - UNDERSTANDING SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER AND OVERDOSE AWARENESS



OVERVIEW

In Canada, approximately 21% of the population (or 6 million people) will experience a substance use disorder or addiction at some point in their lifetime. According to the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, the top addictions in Canada are: alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, gambling, methamphetamine, opioids, and prescription drugs.

Sources: [Penington Institute, 2023](#); [Moore, 2021](#); [Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, 2023](#)



HEALTH REMINDERS!



Safe Injection Sites and Practices

- By ensuring safe use / injection sites and adopting best practices, we can protect lives in many ways. These assist with connecting people to social services and healthcare, reducing the risk of accidental overdose, reducing public drug use and discarded drug equipment, reducing the spread of infectious diseases, and reducing strain on emergency medical services.

Starting a Difficult Conversation

- Are you unsure how to talk to your loved ones and/or your healthcare provider about substance addiction? Some tips to start a conversation: **1) learn the facts** about substances you are concerned about and their risks, **2) choose the time and place** with care (private location, calm setting and mood), **3) show concern and compassion** (e.g., tell them you are worried about them, you love them, you want what's best for

them, and share what you have been witnessing behaviourally), **4) listen** (acknowledge their feelings, listen for underlying reasons for why they do it), **5) don't stigmatize** (be mindful of your tone and avoid judgement), **6) respect** where they are at (e.g., offer supports and resources, but recognize the decision to seek help is ultimately theirs), and **7) be patient** (e.g., do not rush the conversation or feel you need to find a solution immediately, you may have to come back to the conversation at a later time).

- If you or someone you know is struggling with substance use, there are services available to anyone, anywhere, any time: [Canada wide services; Help Guide](#). Encourage your family member or friend to call, visit, or read more information online. You can also offer to go with them to get help as a form of support.



RED FLAGS

- 1 Recognizing warning signs** that indicate there might be a substance use disorder with a family member or friend starts with awareness. Are you noticing that they are acting differently than before, or they are having troubles in different aspects of their life? Look for changes in: **personality** (e.g., isolation, extreme moods, difficulties with alertness, memory or concentration, loss of interest); **habits around their drug or alcohol use** (e.g., drinking first thing in the morning or after work, using more often, spending more money on drugs and alcohol, choosing new activities and friends); and **basic parts of their life** (e.g., reduced work performance, decreased health, tense relationships).
- 2 Signs and Symptoms of an overdose** include nausea and vomiting, severe stomach pain

and abdominal cramps, chest pain, dizziness, diarrhea, loss of balance and coordination, unresponsiveness, limp, seizures, paranoia, slow or erratic pulse, gurgling sounds, blue lips or fingers, etc. These signs depend on the [type of overdose](#) (alcohol, opioid, stimulant, benzodiazepine, etc.)

- 3 In the event of an overdose**, call 911, administer CPR, keep airways clear, administer Naloxone/Narcan if possible, try and keep the person conscious, lay them on their side to prevent choking, stay with them until the paramedics arrive. If the person is unconscious but breathing normally, put them in the [recovery position](#). To learn about when and how to perform CPR, [click here](#).

FUN FACT:



Naloxone is a drug that temporarily reverses effects of an opioid poisoning or overdose. **Naloxone kits** have successfully reversed thousands of overdoses across Canada. There are two types of take-home naloxone kits available, a [spray](#) and an [injectable](#). Take-home kits are also free and available at most pharmacies, walk in clinics, or local health agencies for anyone who is at risk of an overdose.

DID YOU KNOW?



AIMGA experts are available to speak to your organization on this topic.

Book your presentation today by emailing drew@aimga.ca

For more information, check out the full version of the “Living Well With AIMGA” Newsletter by scanning the QR code below with your phone!



<https://aimga.ca/wp-content/uploads/8.August2023-LivingWithAIMGA-Newsletter.pdf>