

Aquarius **NGAGE** supports young people in Northamptonshire County impacted by drug and alcohol use.

Our service provides information, education, advice and support to young people in relation to drug and alcohol use. **NGAGE** is a free and confidential service.

Find out more about our support at:
www.aquarius.org.uk/ **NGAGE**

Contact us: **01604 633848**
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INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Gold

NGAGE is a young people's service delivered by **Aquarius**. A charity with services across the Midlands, supporting people affected by alcohol, drugs and gambling. We have over 40 years' experience providing evidence-based, high quality services to help change behaviour and change lives.



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Recognising Signs of

Overdose and withdrawal

Benzodiazepine & Opioid



Information for parents

NGAGE
with aquarius

Information for

parents

Discovering your child is using **Benzodiazepine** (also known as 'Benzos', such as Valium, Temazepam or Xanax) or **opioids** (such as codeine, morphine, oxycodone, or heroin) is a worrying time, and you may feel overwhelmed and unsupported.

It is important to recognise signs of overdose and withdrawal so that emergency care can be implemented.

What if I'm not sure it's an overdose?

An overdose doesn't always look as obvious or dramatic as it does in the movies. Sometimes, it can be hard to tell if a person is just really high after taking benzos or opioids or actually experiencing a potentially fatal overdose.

When in doubt, treat the situation as an overdose, especially if the person's breathing seems to be affected.

What should I do next?

Overall risk increases when these drugs have been combined or when alcohol has also been consumed therefore seeking medical help is paramount.

If you suspect your child is overdosing call 999 immediately and ask for an ambulance. Alternatively, take your child to A&E. If your child is responsive but you would like medical support and advice, ring NHS 111.

Although you may feel angry and scared, this is not the time to argue. You can help your child by keeping them as calm and comfortable as possible.

And remember, although your child's behaviour and presentation may be difficult to witness, only time will help whatever drugs they have taken, get out of their body.

Recognising Signs of

Overdose

Overdose symptoms are different from person to person; however, these are the most common.

Benzodiazepine

- > Trouble breathing or inability to breathe
- > Bluish fingernails and lips
- > Slurred speech
- > Confusion and disorientation
- > Extreme dizziness
- > Blurred vision or double vision
- > Weakness
- > Uncoordinated muscle movements
- > Tremors
- > Profoundly altered mental status
- > Unconsciousness
(with an inability to wake up).

Opioid

- > Trouble walking, talking, or staying awake
- > Extreme drowsiness
- > Tiny pupils
- > Bluish skin if the person is white, or greyish, ashen skin on a person with darker skin
- > Blue lips
- > Blue or purplish fingernails
- > Shallow, slow or stopped breathing
- > Choking or a snore-like or gurgling sound
- > Confusion
- > Inability to wake up even when shouted at or shaken
- > Slow or weak pulse
- > Clammy skin

Recognising Signs of

withdrawal

Withdrawal symptoms differ from person to person; however, these are the most common.

Benzodiazepine

- > Headaches and muscle aches
- > Nausea and vomiting
- > Upset stomach and diarrhoea
- > Tension and irritability
- > Restlessness and insomnia
- > Dizziness and instability
- > Poor concentration
- > Memory loss
- > Buzzing or ringing in the ears
- > Rapid heartbeat
- > Changes in heart rhythm
- > Anxiety
- > Depression
- > Paranoia
- > Psychosis
- > Delirium or being confused
- > Delusions
- > Hallucinations
- > Out of body thoughts or experiences.

Opioid

- > Craving
- > Drug-seeking behaviour
- > Anxiety
- > Sweating
- > Yawning
- > Runny nose or watery eyes
- > Restlessness / very hard to sleep
- > Leg cramps
- > Muscle twitches
- > Goose pimples
- > Irritability
- > Dilated pupils
- > Loss of appetite
- > Fever
- > Rapid breathing
- > Insomnia
- > High blood pressure
- > Nausea, diarrhoea or vomiting
- > Stomach cramps.

withdrawal

Average timelines

Benzodiazepine withdrawal timeline:

- > The user stops and begins to feel symptoms of withdrawal during the first **24-72 hours**.
- > Within the **first week to 10 days** following the last dose the user will feel a rise and peak in symptoms of withdrawal. During this time seizures are most likely.
- > By **two weeks** following the last dose the user may experience a secondary round of symptoms. These are called rebound withdrawal symptoms because the user may have started to feel better for a few days and then feels very sick again. Sensitivity to light and sound may become evident at this point.
- > **A month** after the last dose the user may feel somewhat normal, but cravings and triggers are likely to occur.

Opioid withdrawal timeline:

- > Withdrawal symptoms typically begin around eight hours after the user stops but can begin up to **sixteen hours** later. These include intense craving, drug-seeking behaviour, and anxiety. Symptoms progress and user may experience sweating, yawning, runny nose, watery eyes and restlessness. Many sufferers find it very hard to sleep at this stage.
- > Symptoms may progress in severity and tend to result in leg cramps, muscle twitches, goose pimples, irritability, dilated pupils, and loss of appetite.
- > Around **thirty-six hours** after the drug has been used, symptoms can include fever, rapid breathing, insomnia, weakness, high blood pressure, nausea, diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach cramps and severe restlessness.
- > When it comes to opioid withdrawal, affected individuals should expect symptoms to worsen before they peak around **48 – 72 hours** after the last drug was taken. After this, the symptoms will gradually subside. In most instances, symptoms will disappear within 7 to 10 days. However, some people will experience cravings for many months while some symptoms will linger for a number of weeks; these can include muscle aches, anxiety, and insomnia.

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