

Safer Drug and Alcohol Use While in Isolation or Quarantine Settings

Being in isolation or quarantine due to possible COVID-19 infection can be very stressful. We recognize that people cope with challenges in a variety of ways and we do not judge your choices when it comes to how you manage your stress or grief. If you use drugs or alcohol while in isolation or quarantine, here are some tips on how to do so more safely.

Safer Drug Use While in Isolation or Quarantine

- **Avoid using alone.** Using drugs alone increases the risk of overdose. Call a friend, another trusted person or the Never Use Alone hotline at 800-484-3731 before you start using. A hotline operator will stay on the phone with you and call for help if you stop responding. For more information, visit neverusealone.com.
- **Consider your current tolerance level.** Think about how much you have been using recently and whether your tolerance might be lower than usual. Tolerance refers to how a person's body adapts to using a drug on a regular basis over time and can be affected by factors such as being sick, being stressed or being in a new environment. If your tolerance is lower than usual, you are at increased risk of overdose.
- **Use less than you normally would and go slow.**
 - If you have bought a supply of drugs to last a few days, you might be tempted to use more than usual. Try to space out what you use.
- **Be aware of fentanyl.** Due to the pandemic, drug quality, purity and strength might be more unpredictable. Be aware that many drugs, including cocaine, crack, heroin, methamphetamines and counterfeit pills, such as Xanax and oxycodone, have been found to contain fentanyl, a strong opioid that can result in overdose.
- **Avoid mixing drugs.** Using different drugs together, including alcohol, increases your risk of overdose. If you do mix, go slow.
- **Have a naloxone kit nearby.** Naloxone is a safe medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. If you have a naloxone kit, leave it in a visible place so someone can access it if needed. If you are staying at a hotel during your isolation or quarantine, ask if naloxone is available.
 - For more information, visit nyc.gov/health and search for **naloxone**.
- **Consider getting on buprenorphine.** If you use opioids, think about getting on buprenorphine, or Suboxone (a common brand of buprenorphine), either long-term or just for the duration of your quarantine or isolation. Call Health + Hospitals' virtual buprenorphine clinic at 212-562-2665.

Safer Alcohol Use While in Isolation or Quarantine

- **Set a drink limit.** If you have a supply of alcohol to last a few days, you might be tempted to drink more than usual. Set a limit for how many drinks you want to have in a day and write it down.

- **Space your drinks and drink water.** Space your drinks out over time and drink non-alcoholic drinks, such as seltzer or water, in between alcoholic drinks. Non-alcoholic drinks help to counteract alcohol's dehydrating effects and can slow your body's alcohol absorption.
- **Identify alternative stress-relieving activities.** Try to find other ways to relieve stress that do not center around drinking alcohol; take breaks from social media and the news, and reach out to talk with loved ones.
- **Eat food while you drink.** Food can slow your body's alcohol absorption and lowers the risk of digestive irritation the next day.
- **Be prepared for possible withdrawal symptoms if you stop drinking suddenly.** Be aware that if you have drunk heavily for a long period of time, and then reduce or stop drinking, you might experience withdrawal symptoms including nausea, tremors, anxiety, hallucinations, seizures and death. Talk with a health care provider before you stop drinking alcohol to figure out if you need medical supervision. If you experience any of these symptoms and you are quarantining or isolating in a hotel, notify staff immediately. If you are at home, call your health care provider.

Additional Guidance

- If you take any medications, make sure you have a 14-day supply.
 - If you are staying at an isolation or quarantine hotel and think you might run out, talk to hotel staff about arranging for pharmacy delivery.
- If you are on medication for opioid use disorder such as methadone or buprenorphine:
 - Contact your opioid treatment provider to discuss your options for telemedicine appointments.
 - Talk with your opioid treatment provider about your options for methadone or buprenorphine delivery.

Resources

- [Syringe Service Programs \(SSPs\)](#) are programs that provide services and sterile drug equipment to people who use drugs. Call your local SSPs to see if they are delivering sterile drug use supplies and naloxone. Visit nyc.gov/health and search for **syringe service programs**.
- NYC Well: NYC Well staff are available 24/7 and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages. For support, call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173 or chat online by visiting nyc.gov/nycwell.
- For additional resources that address issues such as financial help, food, health care or insurance coverage, and more, see the [Comprehensive Resource Guide](#). Visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus, click on the "Community Services" tab on the left, and look for "Comprehensive Resource Guide."