

NOT OUR WAY

DRUGS DON'T HAVE TO BE ILLEGAL TO BE LETHAL

The misuse of pharmaceutical drugs

**“Drugs don’t
have to be
illegal to be
lethal”**

Glenn,
Counsellor

**Our Mob are
1.5 times more
likely to misuse
pharmaceutical
drugs.**

Source: NDSHS

**Pharmaceutical
drugs cause more
drug-related deaths
than illicit drugs.**

Source: Penington Institute



NSW Police Force

Why are pharmaceuticals a problem?

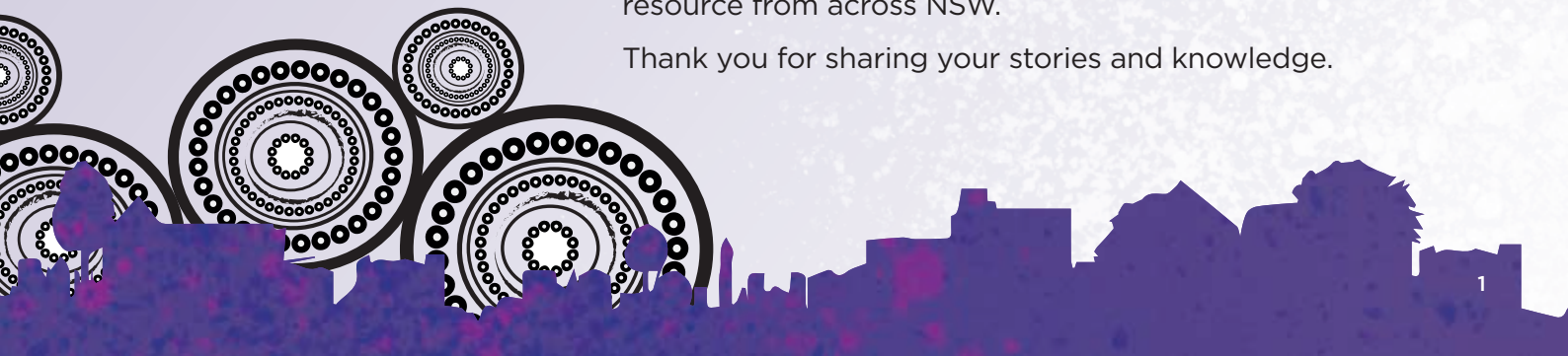
The use and misuse of pharmaceuticals has gone up, especially in our remote communities. Pharmaceutical drugs are killing more of our Mob than other drugs. Our community has had enough... it's Not Our Way.

This booklet has been developed in response to concerns raised by Aboriginal communities dealing with the impacts of pharmaceutical misuse. It aims to provide practical and useful information to support our Mob in dealing with loved ones misusing pharmaceuticals and keeping our community safe.

This booklet also provides advice for our people who are currently misusing pharmaceuticals and seeking support to quit.

We would like to acknowledge all of the people, services and communities that contributed to the development of this resource from across NSW.

Thank you for sharing your stories and knowledge.





What should you do in an emergency?

Call **Triple Zero (000)** immediately if you think someone is in danger because they have misused pharmaceuticals.

The safest thing to do is to act quickly and get help. When a life is in danger, always call Triple Zero (000).

Remember, calling **Triple Zero (000)** doesn't always involve the police. If police arrive, keeping the person alive will be their priority.

When is someone in danger?

There are a number of signs and symptoms that point out someone is in trouble. If you notice some of these signs, you need to get help because they may be overdosing:

- breathing problems
- lips and nails are blue
- they are not moving
- they may be choking
- you can hear gurgling sounds or snoring
- they can't be woken up
- skin feels cold and clammy
- pupils are tiny.

Don't wait until someone can't be woken up

call Triple Zero (000) when someone:

- is having a seizure
- has a severe headache
- has chest pain
- is very paranoid, acting womba, agitated and/or confused (going silly in the head).

Somebody doesn't need to have all of these signs for them to be overdosing.

Only a few could still mean they are in trouble and need help, **call Triple Zero (000) immediately.**



What should I do after calling Triple Zero (000)?

If you are with someone who is overdosing, these are some of the things you can do:

- stay with the person and keep others away until the ambulance arrives
- try not to panic
- try to keep the person awake (talk to them, use their name)
- make sure they have enough air and loosen tight clothing
- if they lie down, put them on their side in case they vomit.

You'll need to provide ambulance officers with as much information as you can:

- what drug they have taken
- how much they have taken
- any packaging, box or labels to identify what drug has been taken
- any existing medical conditions.

Recovery position



1. Kneel by the person's waist
2. Grasp the hand nearest to you, place the back of their hand against their cheek closest to you
3. Lift their leg furthest away from you at the knee and place their foot on the floor
4. Using their knee as a lever, pull the person onto their side
5. Ensure their head is still tilted back and they are on their side.

What is a pharmaceutical drug?

- it is a medicine used to help people who are sick
- some medicines need to be prescribed by a doctor
- other medicines you can buy from the chemist or the supermarket without a prescription. These are called Over-the-Counter or OTC medicines
- all drugs are dangerous if they are not used as instructed, especially prescription drugs
- REMEMBER that a prescription is written by a doctor who knows all about the patient's history and health
- the drugs we're going to yarn about are the ones that have been prescribed by a doctor for people with pain, sleeping problems or anxiety like Fentanyl, Oxy, Xanax, Morphine and Benzos.

We might think that if drugs are given to us by the doctor, 'everything is alright if I use them or take too many'.

How can pharmaceutical drugs be misused?

If you use them right, prescription drugs can help make you better. If you use them wrong, they can even kill you. So be careful about what you take.

Prescription drugs are misused when:

- you take more than what you have been told to take
- you take drugs when you're not sick to get 'high' or escape any negative issues in your life
- you take drugs that belong to a friend or family member.

What might happen if someone is misusing pharmaceuticals?

Make the body and spirit sick



Physical sickness: headaches, drowsiness, feeling or being sick, trouble sleeping, eating disorders, breathing problems, constipation, diarrhoea or tummy pain



Mental health: Mood changes, paranoia, depression, suicidal behaviours and loss of interest in things they usually enjoy



Organ Damage: liver, kidney and stomach damage



Disease: sharing needles can cause Tetanus, Hep B, Hep C and HIV/AIDS



Overdose: seizures, coma or death

Hurt family and friends

- lying and stealing
- not doing what they say they will do
- not taking care of kids
- getting into fights with people and making the family ashamed.

Make it hard at school or at work

- some medicines can make a person drowsy
- forgetting things or being distracted
- consistently missing school, sports, work or other important events
- not doing well at work or school
- being fired from a job
- committing crime and even going to prison.

Don't take prescription drugs that are not prescribed for you.

Important Information about Fentanyl Patches

- one of the most dangerous prescribed drugs when not used properly is Fentanyl, which is being misused in some communities in NSW.
- fentanyl is prescribed by doctors for the control of chronic and severe pain and is very strong. A small amount can kill you.
- it's impossible to measure how much of the drug you are using.

It's impossible to judge 'correct' dose size and when you can't do that you can overdose and die.

How can I stay safe when I have pharmaceutical drugs?

- don't take more than you are told
- don't tell people you have these drugs
- do not share or take drugs prescribed for friends or family
- tell the doctor or pharmacist about anything else you are taking
- keep your medicines locked away so they can't be stolen
- store safely (out of children's sight and reach)
- keep your Medicare card close
- dispose of drugs safely:
 - you can take your unwanted and expired medicines back to a chemist at any time.
 - fold the Fentanyl patch inwards on itself so that the sticky sides meet, and then wrap the patch in paper or plastic and ensure this is disposed of carefully and well out of the reach of children.
 - do not put unused Fentanyl patches in the rubbish, return them to a chemist.

Make sure you follow the instructions.





What about mixing with alcohol/other drugs?

Mixing pharmaceutical drugs with other drugs or alcohol is risky, you could overdose and die.

What do I need to know about pharmaceutical drugs and the law?

The law says some of these drugs are so dangerous that it's illegal just to have them, unless they are prescribed to you. It is a crime if:

- you give or share your prescription drugs with someone else (supply)
- you have drugs that were not prescribed to you (possession) or
- you lie to a doctor to try and get prescription drugs (false representation)

In these cases, there are fines and prison time – you could go away for up to two years and/or get a fine of up to \$2200.





“Reminding yourself that there’s better things out there. There’s a life and if you want it you can get it.”

Wade

Where can I get help?

New South Wales

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)

You can call ADIS any time of the day or week for support, information, advice, crisis counselling and referral to services in NSW.

ADIS counsellors understand the difficulties of finding appropriate drug and alcohol treatment and use their knowledge and experience to assist you.

Sydney: 02 9361 8000

Regional NSW: 1800 422 599

A 24-hour confidential information, advice and referral telephone service.

For Everyone

beyondblue 1300 22 4636

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Support for depression, anxiety and related disorders.

Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF)

Information about ice and its effects, resources, details on ice forums in NSW and a list of help and support services in NSW.

www.adf.org.au/breakingtheice

Aboriginal Health and Research Council (AH&MRC) 9212 4777

The peak representative body and voice on Aboriginal health services in NSW.

www.ahmrc.org.au

Counselling Online

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Free alcohol and drug counselling online

www.counsellingonline.org.au

Family Drug Help: 1300 660 068

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Family Drug Support: 1300 368 186

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Support for families faced with problematic drug use.

Kids Help Line: 1800 55 1800

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Free and confidential telephone and online counselling service for young people aged between 5 and 25.

Lifeline: 13 11 14

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Confidential telephone counselling.

SANE Australia helpline: 1800 187 263

9am–5pm, Monday to Friday

Information and referral about mental health issues.