

Harm Reduction for Substance Use

According to the Harm Reduction Coalition, harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use.

Here are some considerations for harm reduction:

- Get rest.
 - When a body is tired and overworked, it's at higher risk for adverse health experiences.
- Avoid dehydration and malnourishment.
 - Drink plenty of water.
 - Before use, consume a nutritious meal.
 - Take vitamins to replace those lost through use. Always consult with a physician about what vitamin regimen is best.
- Maintain hygiene.
 - Shower and wash hands regularly. Soap and water are preferred but when access to this is limited, utilize hand sanitizer.
 - If using substances intravenously (IV), ensure injection sites are cleaned use to avoid infection.
 - Brush teeth with toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Utilize safer injecting supplies (such as sterile injecting equipment).
- Have access to Naloxone.
 - This can be obtained at many pharmacies and reverses the effects of opiate drugs. For more information, view our [Naloxone HelpSheet](#).
- When available, utilize drug testing kits to ensure the substance being used is what the consumer believes it to be.
 - Substances can often times be cut or laced with other substances.
- Have a safety contact person that can be reached if additional help or support is needed.
 - If there is not a person like this to help support, help is available 24/7 by calling 211. If there is a medical emergency, call 911.
- Do not use substances when alone in the home.
 - If an overdose should happen to occur due to opioid use, it's important someone is there to administer Naloxone and call 911.
- Because substance use can sometimes lead to higher risk sexual behavior, maintain access to condoms.

Community resources to help support:

- There are resources that may be able to assist with housing, food and other [basic need services](#) in the community. To get connected with these services, call the Helpline Center at 211.
- Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) is the use of medications, in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, to provide a "whole-patient" approach to the treatment of substance use disorders (SUD). For more information, view our [MAT HelpSheet](#).
- Schedule preventative health care screening such as yearly doctor visits and routine dental check-ups. [The Helpline Center's Health Navigator](#) may be able to assist with this process.
- If it is decided that a lifestyle change is wanted, help is available 24/7 by calling the SD Resource Hotline at 800-920-4343.

Sources:

- [National Harm Reduction Coalition](#)
- [United States Interagency Council on Homelessness](#)

Disclaimer: This HelpSheet is developed by the Helpline Center. HelpSheets provide a brief overview of the designated topic. For more information, call 211 or text your zip code to 898211.

