Identifying and Responding to an Opioid Overdose

**OVERDOSE RISK FACTORS:**

- Changes in Drug Strength
- Changes in Tolerance
- Mixing Drugs (Especially Benzodiazepine and Opiates)
- Using Alone
- IV Use
- Physical Health Issues
- A Previous Overdose

**THREE SIGNS OF AN OVERDOSE:**

1. Blue lips and/or fingertips (for darker skinned people lips may appear pale or grey)
2. Infrequent, slow breathing or gasping, gurgling or a “death rattle”
3. Unresponsive to shouting, shaking or a sternal rub (rubbing the knuckles of a closed fist against the sternum)

**HOW TO RESPOND:**

- Assess the signs
- **Start rescue breathing** – if the individual experiencing an overdose is not breathing it is important to get oxygen into the body FIRST
- **If you have naloxone administer it after the first round of rescue breathing**
  - To use:
    - Remove nasal spray from box
    - Follow the instructions on the package
- **CALL 911!** (Massachusetts Good Samaritan Law protects you)
- Resume rescue breathing and wait for the paramedics

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