



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Codeine overdose

URL of this page: //medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002613.htm

Codeine overdose

Codeine is a drug in some prescription pain medicines. It is in the class of medicines known as opioids, which refers to any synthetic, semisynthetic, or natural drug that has morphine-like properties.

Codeine overdose occurs when someone takes more than the normal or recommended amount of this medicine. This can be by accident or on purpose.

This article is for information only. DO NOT use it to treat or manage an actual overdose. If you or someone you are with overdoses, call your local emergency number (such as 911), or your local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States.

Poisonous Ingredient

Codeine can be poisonous in large amounts.

Where Found

Codeine is found in these medicines:

- Acetaminophen and codeine phosphate
- Fioricet with codeine
- Promethazine with codeine cough syrup
- Robitussin A-C
- Triacin-C
- Tuzistra XR
- Tylenol with codeine #3

Other medicines may also contain codeine.

Symptoms

Symptoms of a codeine overdose include:

- Bluish fingernails and lips (cyanosis)
- Breathing problems, such as slow and labored breathing, shallow breathing, no breathing

- Cold, clammy skin
- Confusion
- Constipation
- Drowsiness, fatigue, weakness
- Flushing of the skin
- Itching
- Lightheadedness, dizziness
- Loss of consciousness, coma
- Low blood pressure, weak pulse
- Muscle twitches
- Nausea and vomiting
- Tiny pupils
- Spasms of the stomach and intestines

Some of these symptoms may occur even when a person takes the correct amount of codeine.

Before Calling Emergency

Have this information ready:

- The person's age, weight, and condition
- The name of the product (ingredients and strength, if known)
- When it was swallowed
- The amount swallowed
- If the medicine was prescribed for the person

Poison Control

Your local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States. This national hotline will let you talk to experts in poisoning. They will give you further instructions.

This is a free and confidential service. All local poison control centers in the United States use this national number. You should call if you have any questions about poisoning or poison prevention. It does NOT need to be an emergency. You can call for any reason, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What to Expect at the Emergency Room

Take the container with you to the hospital, if possible.

Your health care provider will measure and monitor your vital signs, including temperature, pulse, breathing rate, and blood pressure.

Tests that may be done include:

- Blood and urine tests
- CT scan (advanced imaging) of the brain for neurologic symptoms
- Chest x-ray
- Electrocardiogram (ECG)

Treatment may include:

- Fluids through a vein (IV)
- Medicine to reverse the depressive effects of the painkiller (naloxone) and treat other symptoms
- Activated charcoal (if a reversal agent is not given)
- Laxative
- Breathing support, including oxygen, tube through the mouth into the lungs, and breathing machine (ventilator)

Outlook (Prognosis)

Codeine is usually combined with other medicines, such as acetaminophen. Because of this, the harmful effects of these other medicines must also be treated. Shock, severe pneumonia, brain damage, and death are possible.

Alternative Names

Methylmorphine overdose

References

Aronson JK. Opioid receptor agonists. In: Aronson JK, ed. *Meyler's Side Effects of Drugs*. 16th ed. Waltham, MA: Elsevier; 2016:348-380.

Nikolaides JK, Thompson TM. Opioids. In: Walls RM, ed. *Rosen's Emergency Medicine: Concepts and Clinical Practice*. 10th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2023:chap 151.

Review Date 7/1/2023

Updated by: Jesse Borke, MD, CPE, FAAEM, FACEP, Attending Physician at Kaiser Permanente, Orange County, CA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

Learn how to cite this page



A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by URAC, for Health Content Provider (www.urac.org). URAC's accreditation program is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#), [editorial process](#), and [privacy policy](#).

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed medical professional should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Links to other sites are provided for information only – they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. No warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, is made as to the accuracy, reliability, timeliness, or correctness of any translations made by a third-party service of the information provided herein into any other language. © 1997-2025 A.D.A.M., a business unit of Ebix, Inc. Any duplication or distribution of the information contained herein is strictly prohibited.



National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

National Institutes of Health