

What an **emergency response** to synthetics should look like

**AT THE HEART
OF THE MATTER,
NZ DRUG
FOUNDATION.**

Te Tūāpapa Tarukino o Aotearoa

Use first aid to keep vital body functions going and call emergency services for more support. The newness and number of synthetics mean that there are not substance-specific clinical pathways, however, general first aid helps.

If someone is overdosing, call 1-1-1

AND THEN:

- ▶ Stay with them.
- ▶ Find a safe place to calm them down and reassure them.
- ▶ Lie them on their side with airways open if they lose consciousness.
- ▶ Let the first responder know what they have used.

This is what an overdose looks like:

Fast or irregular heartbeat, difficulty breathing, extreme agitation, loss of consciousness, seizures, foaming at the mouth.

Be aware some people might be aggressive and unpredictable.



DOWNLOAD THE RED CROSS APP

In case of emergency, services, friends and whānau can download this free first aid app. Step-by-step advice is provided for seizures, poisonings and loss of consciousness. redcross.org.nz/first-aid/first-aid-app/

FOR HEALTH SERVICES:

ONE: STABILISE THE PERSON

Address immediate mental health issues. People are likely to be distressed and agitated.

Support them through withdrawal, which can start within an hour of use. This may require a longer stay for observation.

TWO: IDENTIFY THE SUBSTANCE

Knowing the exact substance will allow more effective treatment.
Carry out a toxicology screening with patient consent.

If they still have the substance get it tested by ESR (most emergency departments have an agreement with ESR and this is funded)

THREE: ONCE DISCHARGED, CONNECT THEM WITH SOCIAL SERVICES

Talk with the person about who can support them not to use because they might have a strong compulsion to use again.

Connect people with support services, especially for mental health and housing.
Give them the Synthetic Psychoactive Substances [brief advice card](#).

FOLLOW-UP:

People may experience on-going mental health or physical health issues. Ensure they are getting the support they need.

If appropriate involve the family in the recovery plan for the person.

Pass on information about the substance to the Ministry of Health and the Early Warning System so that the public and services can be warned.