



## Harm Reduction for Families and Caregivers

### What is harm reduction?

“Harm reduction” aims to keep people safe and to reduce deaths, disease and injuries from high-risk behaviour.

Harm reduction involves a range of support services and strategies to help keep individuals, families and communities safer and healthier.

### How can I reduce harm?

There are many ways that you can reduce harm.

- Wash your hands to reduce the spread of germs and disease.
- Brush your teeth to reduce dental decay.
- Use seat belts and child car seats to reduce serious injury or death.
- Use a helmet and knee, elbow, and wrist pads during sports activities to reduce serious head and body injuries.
- If you smoke, do so outside of your home to prevent exposing your family to second-hand smoke.
- If you plan to drink alcohol, designate a driver to prevent accidents and injuries.

### How can parents, caregivers and communities reduce harm?

A strong community is the result of healthy individuals and families. Together we can all make a difference.

- Support school-based education programs on tobacco, alcohol and other drugs that offer children information and skills to make safe, healthy choices throughout their lives.

- Support and assist with programs that engage children in activities such as sports, art, dance, music, special interest clubs and hobbies. These activities help children develop self-respect, confidence and positive relationships with their families, culture and community, and a sense of belonging, pride and tradition.
- Provide children with the information and skills to stay safe, including teaching them what to do when they cross the street, if they are approached by a stranger, or if they find a needle.

### What are the benefits of harm reduction related to substance use?

Harm reduction can have many benefits for people who use substances, their families and their communities. Research shows harm reduction activities can help in a number of ways:

- Reduce HIV infection and hepatitis
- Reduce overdose deaths and other early deaths among people who use substances
- Reduce injection substance use, the frequency of injecting and the number of used needles in public
- Reduce the sharing of needles and other substance use equipment
- Educate about safer injecting
- Educate about sexual health, sexually transmitted infections and safer sex
- Increase condom use
- Reduce crime and increase employment among people who use substances
- Increase referrals to treatment programs and health and social services



## What services are available for people who use drugs?

A range of services is available to prevent harms from substance use.

### **Needle distribution/recovery programs**

Distribute clean and recover used needles and other harm reduction supplies, and provide information on their safe disposal

### **Substitution therapies**

Substitute illegal heroin with legal, non-injection methadone or prescription heroin

### **Outreach and education**

Make contact with people who use substances to encourage safer behaviour

### **Supervised consumption facilities**

Prevent overdose deaths and other harms by providing a safer, supervised environment

## For More Information

- Harm Reduction: A British Columbia Community Guide  
[www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2005/hrcommunityguide.pdf](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2005/hrcommunityguide.pdf)
- [HealthLink BC File #102a Understanding Harm Reduction](#)
- [HealthLink BC File #85 Hand Washing for Parents and Kids](#)
- [HealthLink BC File BC #30c Protecting your Family from Second-hand Smoke](#)
- [HealthLink BC File # 38d Pregnancy and Alcohol Use](#)
- [HealthLink BC File #97 Contact with Blood or Body Fluids: Protecting against Infection](#)

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