



INTERNATIONAL
OVERDOSE
AWARENESS DAY

Recognising those people who go unseen

International Overdose Awareness Day is a time to remember those who have been impacted by overdose and to act to reduce the number of deaths due to overdose and the stigma attached to misuse of substances. It is a time to end our silence; to make space for those who have been impacted to share their stories and reach out for help.

2023 theme

The theme for 2023 is, "Recognising those people who go unseen." Along with family and friends, we acknowledge the workers in healthcare and support services extending strength and compassion; or spontaneous first responders who selflessly assume the role of lifesaver.

History

Overdose Awareness Day was initiated in 2001 by Sally J Finn at The Salvation Army in St Kilda, Melbourne. Since then, many community members as well as government and non-government organisations have held events to raise awareness and commemorate those who have been impacted by drug overdose.

In 2012, the not-for-profit Australian public health organisation, Penington Institute, took on responsibility for the coordination of International Overdose Awareness Day. It is now a global event held every year on **31 August**.



Facts

Overdose is the second and third leading cause of death for those in their thirties and twenties, respectively.¹ On average, this is five deaths per day. Opioids were the most commonly identified substances involved in drug-induced deaths.² According to the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), 68 per cent of drug-induced deaths in Australia were accidental.³ We encourage you to take time to remember and to act.

¹ <https://www.penington.org.au/overdose/overdose-projects-campaigns/australias-annual-overdose-report/>

^{2, 3} [National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre \(NDARC\)](#)

Scripture suggestions

God our Father loves us. He treats us with undeserved grace and has given us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope.

2 Thessalonians 2:16 (CEV)

*I cried out, "I am slipping!"
but your unfailing love, O Lord, supported me.
When doubts filled my mind,
your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer.*

Psalms 94:18-19 (NLT)

*Lord, you know the hopes of the helpless.
Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them.*

Psalms 10:17 (NLT)

Prayer

Father God, today we acknowledge that, tragically, the number of drug-induced deaths across our country and across our world continues to rise.

We believe that you hear the cries of those who are hurting and respond with compassion and love. Fill our hearts with your compassion. May we share hope with those who desperately need it.

For the family and friends who have been impacted by drug-induced deaths, we pray for peace. Support them with your unfailing love.

We think of those who, by choice or circumstance, have become the first responder for someone in crisis. We thank you for their courage and ask that you will wrap them in the comfort of your presence. Send people to minister to them, people who will hear and share their pain.

Give each one of us the courage to see the pain in our world and respond. May we speak up for justice and protect those who are vulnerable.

Amen.

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Time to remember

Make space to remember those in your corps and community who have been impacted by overdose. This may include those who have suffered permanent injury or death due to overdose, family members and friends, or first responders.

Some ideas include:

- Create a photo wall
- Host a prayer meeting
- Plant a tree with a memorial plaque
- Hold a candlelight vigil
- Invite someone to share their story

Time to act

- **Stay informed** — subscribe to the [Penington Institute newsletter](#)
- **Reach out** — lobby politicians to make lifesaving policy changes — see the [IOAD Advocacy toolkit](#) for ideas and templates
- **Raise awareness** — print and make available the 'Signs of Overdose 101' cards in the [IOAD Unrecognised first responders campaign kit](#)
- **Write a card** — send a note to first responders in your community, thanking them for the work they do with those impacted by overdose
- **Get equipped** — Arrange for a group from your corps to attend Naloxone training in-person or online (Naloxone is a drug that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose and is available for [free from participating pharmacies](#) in Australia)

For more resources for International Overdose Awareness Day, visit OverdoseDay.com

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