



Drugs for Selected Medication Overdoses and Poisonings

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Hospitals may not be prepared to treat poisonings or overdoses due to unavailability of antidotes. Unavailability of enough antidote to treat a patient until more of the antidote can be procured can also be a problem. Hospitals should stock type and quantity of antidotes based on geographic location, type of hospital, referral base, risk of more than one victim, etc.¹ For example, snake bites are not uncommon in rural areas, or local industry might increase the risk of exposure to certain chemicals. Cost can be a concern; avoid stocking excessive amounts or using antidotes inappropriately.¹ Some states have suggested par levels of antidotes, so check with your state's poison control center, which can be reached at 800-222-1222 (US). In Canada, check with the Canadian Association of Poison Control Centres (http://www.capcc.ca/provcentres/centres.html). For management of specific patients, consultation with poison control center staff helps ensure the right antidote, right frequency, right dose, etc is given. Plus, these experts will make follow-up calls to ensure that the patient's treatment remains optimal throughout their hospital stay.² See our FAQ, *Managing Bleeding with Anticoagulants* for information on anticoagulant reversal agents.

—Doses in chart can vary according to the reference used. Doses may also vary depending on patient-specific characteristics and clinical considerations. This chart is **NOT meant to replace consultation with poison control center** staff or use of appropriate resources. (Also see footnotes at end of chart.)—

Drug or Antidote ^c	Used For Poisonings	Adult Dosing	Amount to Treat a	Comments
	or Overdoses with:	Information ^a	100 kg Adult for 24 h ^{1,b}	
Acetylcysteine* (Available as injection and inhalation solution for oral use.)	• Acetaminophen ¹	 Regimens vary. A regimen that provides acetylcysteine ≥300 mg/kg (PO or IV) over the first 20 to 24 h of treatment is recommended.⁴ See footnote d for examples. 	30 g	 Errors include delayed treatment, dose miscalculation, treatment interruption, wrong infusion rate, and prolonged infusion. 4.28 Do not stop treatment before discontinuation criteria are met. 4
Atropine sulfate** Continued	 Beta-blockers³⁰ Calcium channel blockers³⁰ Clonidine²⁹ Digoxin³⁰ Local anesthetics³⁰ 	• IV: 0.5 to 1 mg every 3 to 5 min PRN for bradycardia (max total dose 3 mg) ^{29,30}		 Commonly used first-line for bradycardia.^{29,30} Use based on case reports; efficacy varies.³⁰

Drug or Antidote ^c	Used For Poisonings or Overdoses with:	Adult Dosing Information ^a	Amount to Treat a 100 kg Adult for 24 h ^{1,b}	Comments
Atropine sulfate, continued	 Organophosphate pesticides or nerve agents¹ Carbamate insecticides¹ 	 IV loading dose: 1 to 2 mg doubled every 5 min PRN.³⁰ Infusion: 10% to 20% of the total loading dose/h, up to 2 mg/h.³⁰ 	165 mg	 Used to treat muscarinic effects.³⁰ Titrate to control bronchorrhea, bronchospasm, bradycardia, and blood pressure.³⁰ Does not treat paralysis (does not block acetylcholine at the neuromuscular junction or nicotinic ganglia).³⁰
Calcium chloride 10%**	 Beta-blockers³³ CCBs¹ Fluoride¹ 	• For CCB overdose, 2 g IV over 5 min, then 20 to 40 mg/kg/h. ^{22,30}	10 g	 Titrate to blood pressure.³⁰ Central line administration preferred.³⁰ Monitor serum ionized calcium. Max level 1.5 to 2 x ULN.³⁰
Calcium disodium versenate (edetate calcium disodium)	• Lead¹	Dose differs according to BSA, SCr, and blood level of lead. See product information for specific doses.	2.25 g	Also called calcium disodium EDTA. ²²
Calcium gluconate 10%**	 Beta-blockers³³ CCBs¹ Fluoride¹ 	• For CCB overdose, 6 g IV over 5 min, then 60 to 120 mg/kg/h. ^{22,30}	30 g	 Titrate to blood pressure.³⁰ Monitor serum ionized calcium. Max level 1.5 to 2 x ULN.³⁰
Calcium trisodium pentetate	Americium¹ Curium¹ Plutonium¹	• 1 g IV over 3 to 4 min. ²²	1 g	Also called calcium DTPA, Ca- DTPA, and pentetate calcium trisodium. 1,22
Charcoal	Several medications and poisons ³¹	• 50 to 100 g PO x 1. ²² Multiple doses are not routinely indicated. ^{5,31}	100 g ²²	 Most benefit if given within 1 h.⁵ Avoid formulation with sorbitol.⁵

Drug or Antidote ^c	Used For Poisonings or Overdoses with:	Adult Dosing Information ^a	Amount to Treat a 100 kg Adult for 24 h ^{1,b}	Comments
Centruroides Antivenin* (Anascorp [US])	Scorpion ¹	• 3 vials IV in 50 mL NS over 10 min. ²⁰	3 vials	Additional doses may be needed. ²⁰
Crotalidae Polyvalent Immune Fab, ovine* (CroFab [US])	• North American pit vipers (rattlesnake, copperhead, water moccasin, or cottonmouth) ^{1,22}	• 4 to 6 vials IV in 250 mL NS (total volume) over 60 min. ²² Monitor for one hour. ²² Follow poison control's recommendation regarding need for additional doses. ⁷	18 vials	 Some patients may need up to 12 vials initially, depending on severity of envenomation and clinical judgement.²² For the first 10 min, infuse at 25 to 50 mL/h, then increase rate to 250 mL/h if no allergic reaction.²² Anavip (crotalidae immune f[ab]2, equine) is also available.
Cyproheptadine	Serotonergic drugs ¹	 Initial (first 24 h): 4 mg PO TID, or 12 mg x 1, then 2 mg Q1-2H.²¹ Maintenance: 2 mg TID to 8 mg QID based on efficacy and tolerability.²¹ Continue for 1 to 4 weeks, with tapering over ~2 weeks.²¹ 	36 mg	
Dantrolene** (e.g., Dantrium, generics; Ryanodex [US])	• Anesthetic agents that cause malignant hyperthermia in susceptible people. ²⁴	• 2.5 mg/kg IV, repeated PRN for continued symptoms, with a suggested max dose of 10 mg/kg. ²³	36 vials of dantrolene 20 mg (<i>Dantrium</i> etc), or 3 vials of dantrolene 250 mg (<i>Ryanodex</i> [US]) ³⁴	 Ensure availability where general anesthesia is administered.¹ The Malignant Hyperthermia Association of the United States (www.mhaus.org) has information on preparedness and a hotline for emergency help (800-644-9737).

Drug or Antidote ^c	Used For Poisonings or Overdoses with:	Adult Dosing Information ^a	Amount to Treat a 100 kg Adult for 24 h ^{1,b}	Comments
Deferoxamine mesylate* (Desferal, generics)	• Iron¹	Acute iron intoxication: 15 mg/kg/h IV infusion until iron level and symptoms have normalized. ²²	36 g	 Can be given IM, but IV is preferred because of more reliable absorption.²² Total dose determined by clinical response.²²
Dextrose (D50)**	Hypoglycemic agents ¹	 IV: 10 to 25 g (20 to 50 mL) repeated PRN.²² Initial treatment is usually followed by a continuous infusion of D10.^{1,22} 	250 g	
Digoxin Immune Fab** (DigiFab)	Digoxin ¹	Dose varies by amount ingested. See product information for details.	15 vials	
Dimercaprol* (Bal [US])	 Arsenic¹ Gold²² Lead¹ Mercury¹ 	Dose differs by heavy metal and severity of poisoning. See product information for details.	2.4 g	
Ethanol*	 Ethylene glycol (antifreeze)¹ Methanol¹ 	 PO: 1g/kg, then 0.5 g/kg hourly, titrated to an ethanol target level of 1 to 1.5 g/L.^{6,8} Continue until ethylene glycol or methanol level is <20 mg/dL⁹ 	360 g	 Fomepizole is preferred because it is easier to use and has fewer side effects. ^{1,6} Injectable dehydrated alcohol is not FDA-approved as an antidote. ³⁹
Flumazenil**	Benzodiazepines ¹	 IV bolus regimen: 0.2 mg x then 0.3 mg 30 sec later if needed. Additional 0.5 mg doses can be given every min to a total dose of 3 to 5 mg. If resedation occurs, regimen can be repeated every 20 min to a max of 3 mg each h.²² IV infusion: 0.1 to 4 mg/h titrated to level of sedation.²² 	12 mg	 Flumazenil half-life is shorter than that of benzodiazepines, so resedation can occur.²² Used for sedation, not hypoventilation.²² Can precipitate seizures, especially in patients taking benzodiazepines chronically.²² Could precipitate anxiety or a panic attack.²²

Drug or Antidote ^c	Used For Poisonings or Overdoses with:	Adult Dosing Information ^a	Amount to Treat a 100 kg Adult for 24 h ^{1,b}	Comments
Fomepizole*	 Ethylene glycol (antifreeze)¹ Methanol¹ 	• IV: 15 mg/kg x 1, then 10 mg/kg Q12H x 4 doses, then_15 mg/kg Q12H until ethylene glycol or methanol levels are <20 mg/dL. ²²	4.5 g	 Fomepizole is preferred over ethanol because it is easier to use and has fewer side effects.^{1,6} During hemodialysis, doses should be given Q4H.²²
Glucagon** (GlucaGen)	Beta-blockers¹ CCBs¹	• IV: 2 to 10 mg, then 1 to 15 mg/h continuous infusion. ³⁰	250 mg	 In Canada, IV administration is off-label. 10 Used for bradycardia and hypotension. 30 Vomiting is common. 30 Tachyphylaxis may develop quickly. 30 Efficacy varies. 30 Not a preferred treatment for CCB toxicity due to limited/mixed evidence. 30
Glucarpidase (Voraxaze [US])	Methotrexate ¹	• IV: 50 units/kg/dose over 5 min x 1 dose ²²	5 vials	 Indicted to treat toxic levels in patients with slow methotrexate clearance due to kidney impairment.²² Separate from leucovorin by ≥2 hours.²²
Hydroxocobalami n hydrochloride** (Cyanokit [US])	• Cyanide ¹	• IV: 5 g in 200 mL NS (preferred diluent) over 15 min x 1 dose. Repeat the 5 g dose if necessary, infusing it over 15 to 120 min. ²²	10 g	

Drug or Antidote ^c	Used For Poisonings or Overdoses with:	Adult Dosing Information ^a	Amount to Treat a 100 kg Adult for 24 h ^{1,b}	Comments
Insulin, regular	 Beta-blocker³³ CCB³³ 	 1 unit/kg IV bolus, then 0.5 units/kg/h IV infusion.³³ Titrate every 15 to 30 min.³⁶ 		 Administer with D10 at 0.5 g/kg/h. If glucose is <200 mg/dL, start with a bolus of 50 mL of D50.³⁵ Target HR (50 bbm), MAP (65 mm Hg), and glucose (e.g., 125 to 250 mg/dL).^{36,37}
Latrodectus mactans antivenin	Black widow spider	 IV: 2.5 mL (6,000 units) in 10 to 50 mL NS over 15 min.²² A second dose may be nessessary.²² 	1 vial	 Perform skin or conjunctival sensitivity testing before administration; serum sickness and/or death could occur in patients allergic to horse serum.²² Dose can be given IM, but IV is preferred in severe cases, and in children.²²
Leucovorin*	Methotrexate ¹ Methanol ¹	• IV, IM, or PO: 15 mg (10 mg/m²) Q6H until serum methotrexate level is <0.05 micromol/L. If SCr has increased ≥50% above baseline 24 hours following methotrexate administration, or if serum methotrexate is >5 micromol/L, use leucovorin 100 mg/m² IV or IM Q3H until serum methotrexate level is <0.05 micromol/L.²²	1,000 mg	Role in methanol poisoning is unclear. ²⁵

Drug or Antidote ^c	Used For Poisonings or Overdoses with:	Adult Dosing Information ^a	Amount to Treat a 100 kg Adult for 24 h ^{1,b}	Comments
Levocarnitine* (Carnitor, generics)	Valproic acid	IV: 100 mg/kg x 1, then 50 mg/kg (max 3 g) Q8H (if tolerated) until ammonia levels are dropping and patient is improving. ²⁶	15 g	
Lipid emulsion**	• Local anesthetics ¹	See our checklist, Safe Use of Local Anesthetics.	1,250 mL	Our checklist, Safe Use of Local Anesthetics, provides information on strategies to prevent and manage toxicity.
Methylene blue**	 Methemoglobin- emia¹ CCB³⁰ 	 IV: 1 to 2 mg/kg, repeated hourly if necessary.^{22,30} IV infusion (for treatment-resistant vasodilatory shock due to CCB overdose): 1 mg/kg/h.³⁰ Max dose 5 to 7 mg/kg.³⁰ 	600mg	 For methemoglobinemia, consider alternate treatment if no resolution after two doses.²² Efficacy for CCB overdose is unclear.³⁰
Micrurus fulvius antivenin (US)*	North American coral snake (Eastern and Texas)	 IV: 3 to 5 vials (30 to 50 mL when reconstituted). Administer in 250 to 500 mL NS.¹⁹ 	10 vials	 Consider skin testing before treatment.²² Consider reconstituting one vial to withdraw test dose from before reconstituting the remaining vials to minimize waste in case patient has anaphylaxis to test dose.
Naloxone** (Narcan)	• Opioids ¹	 See our FAQ, Meds for Opioid Overdose. An IV maintenance infusion starting with 2/3 of the effective dose per hour can be titrated to maintain respiratory drive and airway protection.³⁰ 	40 mg	

Drug or Antidote ^c	Used For Poisonings or Overdoses with:	Adult Dosing Information ^a	Amount to Treat a 100 kg Adult for 24 h ^{1,b}	Comments
Octreotide* (Sandostatin)	Sulfonylureas ¹	• SC: 50 to 100 mcg Q6-12H ¹¹	225 g	Used to reverse hypoglycemia. 11
Physostigmine salicylate**	Anticholinergics ¹	 IV: 0.04 mg/kg (2 mg), then 1 to 4 mg every 20 minutes. Repeat previously effective dose if symptoms recur.¹² Administer slowly (e.g., in 50 mL NS over 10 to 15 min).¹² 	4 mg	 Unapproved drug¹² Used to target mental status changes. 12 Contraindicated with cholinesterase inhibitors for dementia (e.g., donepezil). Use caution in tricyclic antidepressant ingestion. 12
Potassium iodide* (Iosat, ThyroSafe, tablets; oral solution [US]; RadBlock [Canada])	Thyroid radioiodine protection ¹	• PO: 130 mg x 1 ¹³	130 mg	Product is OTC.
Pralidoxime chloride* (Protopam [US])	Organophosphate 1	Follow poison center dosing recommndations. 14	18 g	Can be given IM but IV is preferred. 14
Prussian blue (Radiogardase)	Radiocesium ¹ Thallium ¹	• PO: 3 g TID ¹⁵	25 g	 Also called ferric hexacyanoferrate.¹⁵ Treatment duration dependent on level of internal radioactivity.¹⁵
Pyridoxine hydrochloride**	 Isoniazid¹ Hydrazine¹ 	• IV: Give g per g for the amount of isoniazid taken. 16,17 If isoniazid dose unknown, give pyridoxine 5 g over 30 to 60 min. 16 If seizing, administer over 3 to 5 minutes. 16 May repeat if needed. 16	24 g	Consider similar dosing for hydrazine toxicity. 18

Drug or Antidote ^c	Used For Poisonings or Overdoses with:	Adult Dosing Information ^a	Amount to Treat a 100 kg Adult for 24 h ^{1,b}	Comments
Sodium bicarbonate**	 Tricyclic antidepresants¹ Cocaine¹ Local anesthetics¹ 	 IV Bolus: 50 to 150 mEq (50 to 150 mmol).³⁰ Maintenance: 150 mEq (150 mmol)/L infused at 1 to 3 mL/kg/h.³⁰ 	84 g (1,000 mEq)	 For wide-complex tachyarrhythmias (cocaine: or cardiac arrest).³⁰ Do not exceed blood pH 7.55, or sodium 155 mEq/L.³⁰ Monitor for hypokalemia.³⁰
	• Salicylates ¹	• IV: 132 to 150 mEq (132 to 150 mmol) in 850 mL D5W with 20 to 40 mEq (20 to 40 mmol) KCl, at 2 to 3 mL/kg/h. ²²		• For salicylate toxicity, target urine output 2 to 3 mL/kg/h and urine pH 7.5 to 8.
Thiamine**	 Ethylene glycol toxicity Ethanol (chronic alcohol misuse) 	 Ethanol misuse: See our FAQ, Management of Inpatient Alcohol Withdrawal. Ethylene glycol toxicity: thiamine 100 mg IV.²⁷ 	1,500 mg	 Our FAQ, Management of Inpatient Alcohol Withdrawal addresses common questions about the pharmacotherapy of alcohol withdrawal in acute care patients. Thiamine is typically given as part of the treatment for ethylene glycol toxicity because it is a cofactor in its metabolism.²⁷
Uridine triacetate (Vistogard [US])	FluorouracilCapecitabine	• PO: 10 g Q6H x 20 doses. ³²	40 g	

Abbreviations: BSA = body surface area; CCB = calcium channel blocker; ED = emergency department; h = hour; IM = intramuscular; IV = intravenous; min = minutes; NS = normal saline; PO = by mouth; PRN = as needed; SC = subcutaneous; SCr = serum creatinine; sec = seconds; TID = three times daily; ULN = upper limit of normal

^{*}Expert Consensus Guidelines for Stocking of Antidotes in Hospitals That Provide Emergency Care recommends that these antidotes be available within 60 min. These can be stocked in the pharmacy if the antidote can be delivered to the emergency department quickly.

- **Expert Consensus Guidelines for Stocking of Antidotes in Hospitals That Provide Emergency Care recommends that these antidotes be available **immediately** (e.g., stocked in the emergency department).¹
- a. Doses may vary according to resource used. Some doses may differ from manufacturer product labeling. Doses may also vary depending on patient-specific characteristics/clinical considerations and should not be used without consultation of appropriate resources and/or consultation with a poison control center.
- b. Information provided to aid in determining appropriate product par levels to stock. **Doses are an approximation** and in most cases will vary depending on patient-specific characteristics and clinical considerations (e.g., weight, amount drug/poison ingested, kidney function, etc). This information should **NOT** be used to guide treatment.
- c. In Canada, some drugs (e.g., black widow antivenin, hydroxocobalamin) are available through Health Canada's Special Access Programme.³
- d. Acetylcysteine dosing example:³⁸
 - Three-bag method (patients ≥ 5 kg):
 - o Bag 1: 150 mg/kg (max 15,000 mg) infused over one hour.
 - o Bag 2: 50 mg/kg (max 5,000 mg) over four hours.
 - o Bag 3: 100 mg/kg (max 10,000 mg) infused over 16 hours.
 - Two-bag method (better-tolerated option for lower-risk patients ≥41 kg):
 - o Bag 1: 200 mg/kg (max 20,000 mg) infused over four hours.
 - o Bag 2: 100 mg/kg (max 10,000 mg) infused over 16 hours.

Users of this resource are cautioned to use their own professional judgment and consult any other necessary or appropriate sources prior to making clinical judgments based on the content of this document. Our editors have researched the information with input from experts, government agencies, and national organizations. Information and internet links in this article were current as of the date of publication.

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