

# Initiating Harm Reduction Discussions With Patients



It's important for clinicians to create a safe space to talk about ways to reduce harm from substance use. By having open and collaborative conversations, clinicians can help patients understand why harm reduction matters to minimize risks associated with taking prescription opioids or using illicit drugs. When discussing harm reduction, it's essential to be empathetic and avoid judgment. Remember, promoting harm reduction involves building trust, providing education, and empowering patients to make safer choices.



**Here are some tips for engaging patients in conversations about harm reduction strategies.**



### ► **Focus on safety and well-being.**

For example:

- “Your safety and well-being come first. Let’s talk about ways to improve your overall health and reduce risks to help protect you.”
- “Preventing overdose is critical. Let’s discuss ways to give you the support to help you stay safe and reduce risks.”

### ► **Create an open, non-judgmental environment.**

For example, “I’m not going to judge you. I want you to feel comfortable sharing your experiences and concerns. This is a place where we can talk freely about ways to support your well-being and reduce risks.”

## CONVERSATION STARTER

### ► Educate on safer practices and lowering risks.

For example:

- “Have you heard about naloxone? It’s a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose and save lives. Having naloxone on hand for emergencies is important. Let’s talk about how you can get it and learn to use it properly.”
- “Let’s look at practical ways to support your health. For example, syringe service programs are a tool that can help reduce transmission of viral hepatitis, HIV, and other blood-borne infections”

### ► Encourage open dialogue so patients can share their thoughts, worries, and questions.

For example:

- “Your input is key to help us make sure we are meeting your specific needs. I’m here to listen and answer any questions or concerns you have about lowering risks and supporting your health.”
- “Is there something in particular you want to talk about or ask when it comes to reducing risks and staying safe? I’m here to listen and offer guidance based on what you need.”



**Want to know more? Check out the following links for more information on related topics.**

- [SAMHSA Harm Reduction Framework](#)
- [Harm Reduction](#)
- [Case Studies: Harm Reduction](#)
- [Overdose Prevention Strategy](#)
- [Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing Opioid Overdose](#)
- [Syringe Services Programs Technical Package](#)