

Learning About Naloxone for Opioid Overdose

What is naloxone?

Opioids are strong pain medicines. Examples include hydrocodone, oxycodone, fentanyl, and morphine. Heroin is an example of an illegal opioid. Taking too much of an opioid can cause death. An overdose is an emergency.

Naloxone is a medicine that reverses the effects of an overdose. If you take it soon enough after an overdose, it can save your life.

Naloxone comes in a rescue kit you can carry with you. You may hear it called a Narcan kit for short.

The rescue kit may contain:

- The medicine.
- Syringes and needles.
- A nasal adapter for the syringes.
- A separate nasal spray device.

Your doctor can give you a prescription for a rescue kit and show you how to use it. In some places you can buy Narcan kits without a prescription.

When is naloxone used?

Naloxone is used when a person shows signs of an opioid overdose. A person may have overdosed if he or she is:

- Sleepy or hard to wake up.
- Confused.
- Not breathing normally.

Make sure your family and friends know about these signs of an overdose.

If someone appears to have overdosed, call. A drug overdose is an emergency.

How do you use it?

If you overdose, you may not be able to give yourself the medicine. So it's very important that your friends and family know how and when to give it to you.

Rescue kits come with instructions. There are two ways to give the medicine. Many rescue kits can be used for either method. The methods are:

- Injection with needle and syringe.
 - Training may be needed in order to use this method correctly.
 - Some rescue kits come with automatic injectors that don't require special training.
 - The medicine can be injected through clothing.
- Nasal spray.
 - Many rescue kits come with a nasal adapter. It attaches to the syringe and turns the medicine into a mist.
 - The mist is sprayed into the nose of a person who has overdosed. The person needs to be lying down when the mist is sprayed.

Overdose symptoms may return a few minutes after the first dose from the rescue kit. If that happens, a second dose is needed. Rescue kits come with two doses for that reason.

Keep your rescue kit with you always. You never know when you might need it.

If you think you or someone else may have overdosed but you're not sure, use the kit anyway. Aside from going through withdrawal, which may be uncomfortable, there is no downside to using this medicine.

Always go to the emergency room after using naloxone. Doctors will want to make sure the overdose has been reversed.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

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