

Naloxone Fact Sheet

What is Naloxone?

Naloxone is a prescription medicine that is used to reverse an opioid overdose. Opioids include heroin and prescription pain medications such as morphine, hydrocodone, and oxycodone.

Naloxone is safe and effective; medical professionals have used it for decades.

Naloxone also goes by the brand names of “Narcan” and “Evzio”.

How Does Naloxone Help?

Naloxone is an antidote to opioid drugs. Opioids can slow or stop a person's breathing, which can lead to death. Naloxone helps the person wake up and continue breathing.

An overdose death may happen hours after taking drugs. If a bystander acts when first noticing a person's breathing has slowed, or when the person will not wake up it is time to call 911 and start rescue breathing (if needed) and administer naloxone.

How Does a Person Administer Naloxone?

A bystander can safely and legally spray naloxone into the nose or inject it into a muscle.

The “Good Samaritan” component of the “Opioid Antidote and Overdose Prevention Act” provides legal protections, both civil and criminal, to the overdose victim and the person who seeks medical assistance, including the administration of naloxone, for the victim of an opioid overdose.

Into the Nose (intranasal spray):

Naloxone for nasal use is given with the application of an atomizer that is placed onto a syringe then placed into each nostril. Intranasal naloxone has not been approved by the FDA (i.e., it is an "off-label" delivery method), but it can be legally prescribed by a physician or approved pharmacist. First responders often give naloxone intra-nasally.

Into the Muscle (intramuscular injection):

Naloxone also can be injected into the upper arm muscle (the deltoid) or the outer thigh. In an emergency, it is safe to inject through clothing.

How Long Does Naloxone Take to Work?

Naloxone acts within 2-5 minutes. If the person doesn't wake up after a 5 minute period, bystanders should dispense a second dose. Rescue breathing should be done while you wait for the naloxone to take effect. Naloxone typically wears off within 30-90 minutes following administration.

What are the Next Steps Following Administration of Naloxone?

Call 9-1-1 and stay with the individual. If you are in a position to help the overdose victim get into treatment for opioid addiction, learn about the available resources and encourage his/her treatment participation.