

Discussing Naloxone with Patients



As a clinician, you can help prevent fatal overdoses by talking with patients about naloxone, telling them where they can get it, and prescribing it when necessary.

About Naloxone

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can restore normal breathing within 2-3 minutes during an opioid overdose. It comes in either over the counter (nasal spray) or prescription (nasal spray or injectable) form. Anyone can administer naloxone—including patients, friends, family, and caregivers.

When to Offer Naloxone

Anyone who is taking opioids is at risk for overdose. Always educate patients about overdose prevention and naloxone use and offer it when prescribing opioids. Also ask patients about people in their life who can carry naloxone to help if there is an overdose.

You may also have opportunities to discuss naloxone with patients who are worried about someone experiencing substance use disorders including opioid use disorder. Offer naloxone as a tool to help prevent fatal overdoses.

Patients at **high-risk of overdose** include patients:

- With a history of overdose.
- With sleep-disordered breathing.
- With a history of substance use disorders.
- Taking benzodiazepines with opioids.
- At risk for returning to a high dose to which they have lost tolerance (such as patients undergoing or who have recently completed tapering, or patients recently released from prison).
- Taking higher doses of opioids (e.g., greater than or equal to 50 MME per day).

Talking Points About Naloxone

It can be helpful to use the following talking points when talking with patients—and their family, friends, and caregivers—about naloxone:

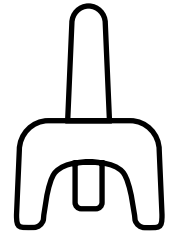
- It can save someone's life by temporarily reversing an opioid overdose.
- Naloxone is small and easy to carry around.
- It's easy to use. (There are two different ways to give naloxone).
- In cases of an overdose, give naloxone, call 911, try to keep the person awake and breathing, lay the person on their side to prevent choking, and then stay until help arrives.

QUICK REFERENCE

- Naloxone won't harm someone if they're overdosing on drugs other than opioids, so it's always best to use it if you think someone is overdosing.
- Drugs may be mixed with fentanyl, which can greatly increase the risk of overdose.
- Some communities have resources where people can get free or low-cost naloxone.
- You can now get naloxone over the counter. You don't need a prescription to purchase naloxone. Check your local pharmacy, convenience store, grocery store, or gas station to find where you can buy naloxone over the counter.

Naloxone and Overdoses Involving Fentanyl

Naloxone can help reverse a fentanyl overdose. Fentanyl may be present in other substances. A fentanyl overdose can happen even if people don't know whether their drugs are mixed with fentanyl, which increases people's risk of overdose.



Resources

- Naloxone overview: [cdc.gov/stop-overdose/caring/naloxone.html](https://www.cdc.gov/stop-overdose/caring/naloxone.html)
- Naloxone toolkit: [cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/hcp/toolkits/naloxone.html](https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/hcp/toolkits/naloxone.html)