



How You Can Help Prevent an Opioid Related Death

What can cause an overdose

An overdose can happen to anyone who takes an illicit drug; misuses a medication either intentionally or unintentionally; takes an unknown medication or a medication belonging to someone else; mixes medications with other drugs, alcohol, or over-the-counter medications; or takes medication such as methadone or buprenorphine (suboxone, subutex) as part of medication assisted treatment (MAT). Taking an opioid with alcohol or a benzodiazepine like Xanax or Valium can increase one's risk for fatal overdose.

You can help save a life by learning the symptoms of an opioid overdose and responding rapidly.

If you see someone experiencing any of the following the symptoms:

- Very pale face and/or feels clammy to the touch
- Limp body
- Purple or blue like color to the fingernails or lips
- Vomiting or making gurgling noises
- In a coma-like state (not able to be awakened or unable to speak)
- Either slow or no heartbeat or breathing

Take the following steps:



Dial 911 immediately
as an overdose can quickly lead to death



Administer naloxone,
also referred to as narcan



Do CPR
if the person is not breathing or breathing very slow and continue until emergency services arrive

Good Samaritan statutes exist in 37 states and the District of Columbia to protect citizens from criminal prosecution if illicit drugs or paraphernalia are present during emergency assistance for an overdose.

If you or someone you know takes opioids or other illicit drugs, carry naloxone.

Naloxone

Naloxone is a medication that is approved by the FDA to reverse an opioid overdose by blocking opioid receptor sites and reversing respiratory depression. This medication is available as an injectable, intranasal spray, and auto-injector.

Naloxone is effective at reversing an overdose if the overdose is caused from opioids or opioids in combination with non-opioid drugs such as sedatives or stimulants. However, if an overdose is caused by non-opioid drugs including benzodiazepines or stimulants WITHOUT opioids, naloxone will not work.

You can obtain naloxone by:

- Contacting your local pharmacy, doctor, health care provider, or substance abuse treatment facility
- Discussing with your physician as naloxone can be prescribed for those at risk including persons who are: currently taking opioids, released from emergency services after opioid overdose, in opioid detoxification or abstinence programs, or taking medications in medication assisted treatment (MAT)

Once you receive naloxone, ensure to read the directions thoroughly on how to administer as there are multiple delivery systems available. Be sure to check the expiration date and replace upon expiration. You may want multiple naloxone kits as multiple doses may be required especially with the trend of counterfeit pills containing the highly lethal synthetic opioid fentanyl.

In the event you administer naloxone, contact 911 immediately as multiple doses may be required, the person may require additional medical attention including oxygen, the effects can wear off in about 30 minutes, and the person can experience withdrawal symptoms and may become agitated.

Follow these tips to help prevent an opioid overdose:

- Only take medication prescribed to you by a doctor and obtained from a certified pharmacy
- Read your medication's directions thoroughly and if unclear on the directions, ask your pharmacist or doctor
- Always adhere to the medication's instructions (do not take more or do not take more often)
- Never combine pain medications with alcohol, sleeping medicines, or illegal drugs
- Secure and store all medication in a safe place where children and pets cannot access
- Promptly dispose of all unused medications (contact your local police department for drop off locations)
- Learn the signs of an overdose, how to respond, and teach them to your family members and acquaintances

Seeking help

Please seek treatment if you or someone you know is misusing opioids.

Addiction to opioids is similar to a chronic disease condition where treatment is required to reduce the risk of overdose and live a healthier life. Various factors can contribute to addiction thus it is important to seek help to address the underlying cause. Evidence-based treatment including medication assisted treatment (MAT) exists to help with the withdrawal symptoms that are associated with stopping the use of opioids.

Here is a list of resources to contact for help

- Call 1-800-662-HELP [4357], which is a free and confidential national 24-hour helpline
- Find a local treatment center by visiting <https://findtreatment.gov/>
- Find a buprenorphine practitioner by state at <https://www.samhsa.gov/medication-assisted-treatment/practitioner-program-data/treatment-practitioner-locator>
- Find support via friends, family, peers, faith based organizations, Narcotics Anonymous (NA), health care providers, or government agencies
- Download SAMHSA's free Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit at https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Opioid-Overdose-Prevention-Toolkit/SMA18-4742?referer=from_search_result
- Download Drug Free America Foundation's free Opioid Prevention Toolkit at <https://www.dfaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Opioid-Toolkit.pdf>



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