

Take Home Naloxone

What you need to know

Naloxone is a part of the emergency treatment for known or suspected opioid overdose/severe adverse reaction. Take Home Naloxone program enables pharmacies and other authorised suppliers to provide naloxone to people at risk of experiencing or witnessing an opioid overdose/severe reaction, free of charge and without a prescription.

About Opioids

- Opioid drugs are commonly prescribed to for pain or for treatment of opioid dependence (e.g. oxycodone, morphine, codeine, fentanyl, buprenorphine, methadone).
- Opioids are also used by people who take/inject drugs for non-medical purposes.
- The most serious side effect of opioids is loss of consciousness and slowed breathing which can result in death.
- This is sometimes referred to as **opioid overdose, opioid severe reaction, opioid poisoning or opioid toxicity**.
- Although commonly used, the term **opioid overdose** can be misleading. The effect on breathing can occur at **any dose** of prescribed or non-prescribed opioids, depending on the person's tolerance and other risk factors.

Factors which increase the risk of experiencing an opioid severe reaction

- Taking high doses of opioids
- Combining opioids with alcohol or other sedating medicines (e.g. sleeping tablets, antipsychotics, other pain medicines)
- Changes in your health (e.g. liver, kidney or lung disease)
- Having a break from taking opioids or taking a lower dose for a period of time (e.g. being in a custodial setting, undergoing detox or a drug withdrawal program)

Signs of opioid severe reaction

- Loss of consciousness / cannot be woken up
- Slow, shallow or erratic breathing or not breathing at all

Signs of opioid severe reaction (Continued)

- Choking/gurgling sounds
- Pale or clammy face
- bluish purple skin (in lighter skinned people) or greyish or ashen skin (for darker skinned people)
- Blue or purplish black fingernails and lips
- Pinpoint (very small) pupils

Naloxone

Naloxone is a medicine which temporarily reverses the effect of opioid drugs. When given to a person experiencing an opioid overdose/severe reaction it helps them to breathe again and it can save their life. Naloxone is safe and easy to use.

It is available for free and without a prescription from pharmacies and other suppliers who participate in the Take Home Naloxone program. These may include alcohol and drug treatment centres, needle and syringe programs and custodial release programs.

Naloxone is available as an injection or a nasal spray and you can have more than one. Your pharmacist or an alternative authorised supplier can give you 2 naloxone products at each visit, and you can make multiple visits in a day. They can show you and your family or friends how to use it and provide written information for you to keep.

The effects of naloxone are temporary, and naloxone is not an alternative to calling for help. Always call 000 for an ambulance. Naloxone can be administered every 2-3 minutes if the person is not responding.

Keep it with you or in an easy to reach place where you and others know it is kept. Replace your supply of naloxone if you use it or it expires.

For further information about naloxone speak to your pharmacist or alternative supplier.

