



Patient Factsheet: Take Home Naloxone and Prescription Painkillers (or “Opioids”)

What is Take Home Naloxone?

Naloxone is a medication that can quickly reverse the effects of an opioid side effect. Having naloxone on hand is like having a fire extinguisher in your home; you hope you never need it, but it is there just in case.

Why am I being recommended Take Home Naloxone?

Your doctor has prescribed you a very strong painkiller (also known as an opioid medicine), such as tramadol, tapentadol, oxycodone, morphine or fentanyl. While this medicine may help manage your pain, it may have some unwanted severe side effects, such as excessive sleepiness and slowing down or stopping breathing. This can happen even when you are used to your medicine and taking it exactly as prescribed.

Naloxone can reverse this and keep you safe while waiting for further assistance.

Certain factors can increase the risk of experiencing a side effect from your opioid painkiller. These factors include being on a high dose of opioids, being acutely unwell with an infection affecting breathing or causing diarrhea and dehydration, having kidney or liver disease, or having a condition that affects breathing, such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

How does naloxone work?

Naloxone comes in a simple-to-use nasal spray called “Nyxoid®”. It is sprayed into the affected person’s nose and gets into the bloodstream quickly to help the person wake up and breathe again, giving more time for emergency help to arrive. **You should always call 000 for an ambulance if using naloxone and let the ambulance service know naloxone has been used.**

Naloxone only lasts around 30 – 90 minutes, so severe opioid side effects (such as stopping breathing) may return even after using naloxone. Another dose can be given after 2 – 3 minutes using a new Nyxoid® device into the other nostril if there is no response. Further doses may be given every 2 – 3 minutes if there is no response or those side effects return, until further assistance is available.

It is important to tell your family and friends where you keep your naloxone and how to administer it to you if you experience those severe opioid side effects.

Where can I get naloxone?

Naloxone is available for free and without a prescription from many pharmacies around South Australia. Locate your nearest pharmacy by visiting www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/naloxone.

For more information, you can contact the Take Home Naloxone Program directly at: Health.THNDASSA@sa.gov.au.

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REMEMBER TO CALL 000 IF YOU HAVE GIVEN NALOXONE