

# What is naloxone?

Naloxone is a medication designed to temporarily reverse an opioid overdose. It is an opioid antagonist, meaning it works by blocking the effects of opioids in a person's system, helping to restore breathing that has slowed or stopped as a result of an overdose from prescription opioid pain medication or heroin.

## Three FDA-Approved Formulations Of Naloxone:

### Narcan® Nasal Spray

NARCAN® Nasal Spray is a prefilled, needle-free device that requires no assembly, which can deliver a single dose into one nostril while the patient lies on their back

### Evzio® Auto-injector

EVZIO® Auto-Injector is injected into the outer thigh to deliver naloxone to the muscle (intramuscular). Once turned on, the device provides verbal instruction to the user describing how to deliver the medication, similar to automated defibrillators.

### Injectable (Professional Training Required)

Naloxone injection comes as a liquid solution to be injected intravenously (into a vein), intramuscularly (into a muscle), or subcutaneously (under the skin). It also comes as a prefilled auto-injection device containing a solution to be injected intramuscularly or subcutaneously. It is usually used to treat opioid overdoses.

Both NARCAN® and EVZIO® are packaged in a carton containing two doses to allow for repeat dosing if needed. They are relatively easy to use and suitable for home use in emergency situations.<sup>1</sup>

A doctor or pharmacist can show patients, their family members, or caregivers how to administer naloxone. Intravenous injection every two to three minutes is recommended in emergencies.<sup>2</sup>

## If You Witness An Overdose

1. Call 911 and administer naloxone.
2. Do rescue breathing or chest compressions. Follow 911 dispatcher directions.
3. Remain onsite until assistance arrives and cooperate with first responders. The ND Good Samaritan Law protects you so you can protect your friend.

*Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 16-4742. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2016.*

## ND Limited Criminal Liability

### ND Century Code 23-01-42:

An individual who prescribes, distributes, dispenses, receives, possesses, or administers an opioid antagonist as authorized under this section is immune from civil and criminal liability for such action. A health care professional who prescribes, distributes, or dispenses an opioid antagonist as authorized under this section is not subject to professional discipline for such action. This section does not expand the scope of practice of a health care professional. Immunity from liability or discipline under this subsection does not apply if the individual's actions constitute recklessness, gross negligence, or intentional misconduct.

FIND OUT MORE AT  
[WWW.HHS.ND.GOV/OPIOIDS](http://WWW.HHS.ND.GOV/OPIOIDS)

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# Frequently Asked Questions

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## How does naloxone work?

Naloxone is an antidote to overdose of prescription or illicit opioids. It works by blocking the effects of opioids in a person's system, helping to restore breathing.

## Can naloxone cause harm?

Naloxone has no potential for abuse or addiction. It is safe, effective and approved by the FDA. However, this lifesaving effect is temporary. Overdose always requires immediate medical attention. Naloxone is safe to give to someone you suspect is experiencing an opioid overdose.

People who are given naloxone during an opioid overdose may wake up and go into withdrawal. Although withdrawal is unpleasant – it is not life-threatening. Naloxone has no effect on a person that has not used heroin or other opioids.

## Do I need a prescription?

In March of 2023, the FDA approved Narcan, 4mg nasal naloxone, for over-the-counter (OTC), nonprescription use. Other forms of naloxone require a prescription.

## Is naloxone available over-the-counter?

Naloxone is available over-the-counter. To access at no cost, contact your local public health unit or order at [hhs.nd.gov/opioids](https://hhs.nd.gov/opioids). Medicaid members can request naloxone at their local pharmacy.

## How do I safely store naloxone?

Store naloxone at room temperature away from direct sunlight. The effectiveness of naloxone also decreases after it has expired. Regularly check the expiration date and replace when necessary.

## How long does naloxone take to work?

Naloxone acts in 2-5 minutes. If the person doesn't wake up in five minutes, a second dose of naloxone may be provided. Narcan® Nasal Spray may be given every 2-3 minutes until emergency medical assistance arrives.

## How long does naloxone last after being given?

The effect of naloxone is temporary. Once naloxone wears off, the person may return to an overdose state and is at risk for death. Overdose always requires immediate medical attention.

## Does naloxone cause someone to become violent?

While naloxone can cause confusion and "fight or flight" response when administered at high doses, naloxone rarely causes overdose victims to become combative when given in smaller amounts.

## Does having naloxone encourage users to keep doing drugs?

Research has shown that access to naloxone does not increase drug use. Limiting access to naloxone only prevents someone from receiving an effective emergency life-saving measure.

## Symptoms of an opioid overdose include:



**Face** is clammy to touch and has lost color. Vomiting or gurgling noises.



**Body** is limp. Fingernails or lips have a blue or purple tinge.



**Sleep** is deep and cannot be awakened. Difficulty speaking.



**Breathing** is slow or has stopped.



**Heartbeat** is slow or has stopped.

# OpiRescue

## An Opioid Overdose Toolkit On Your Phone

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OpiRescue provides information and a 5-step process for how to respond to an opioid overdose event. The guidelines that OpiRescue offers have been developed by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

