

Naloxone

Naloxone is a safe, highly effective rescue medicine for opioid overdose, a leading cause of death worldwide. Naloxone is available in North Carolina as a nasal spray kit, called Project Lazarus, at participating pharmacies.

How to administer Naloxone Nasal Spray

Assemble the vial, syringe, and atomizer. Spray half of the naloxone into each nostril. If the person does not wake up in five minutes, use the second vial of naloxone. Don't try pouring naloxone into the victim's nose or mouth: Trying to make someone who has overdosed and is unconscious swallow naloxone (or any liquid) can be dangerous, as it might go into their lungs. The Project Lazarus Kit will come with directions. For further instructional videos, see: <http://projectlazarus.org/patients-families/videos>

How does naloxone work?

Naloxone, also known by the brand name Narcan, is a safe and effective medication that can reverse the effects of opioid overdose. It attaches to the same parts of the brain that receive heroin and other opioids, and it blocks the opioids for 30-90 minutes to reverse the respiratory depression that would otherwise lead to death from overdose.

Does naloxone only work for overdose cases caused by opioids?

Yes. Naloxone only reverses the effects of opioids such as heroin, methadone, morphine, opium, codeine, or hydrocodone. It does not counter the effect of other types of drugs, such as benzodiazepines (drugs including diazepam, midazolam, or alprazolam), antihistamines (like phentamine or phenergan), alcohol, or other sedatives (drugs such as phenobarbital) or stimulants such as cocaine and amphetamines.

But if the person is not breathing it will not hurt to administer naloxone. If there is an opioid involved they will likely start breathing again—though they will still be sedated from the other drugs. Many overdoses happen due to mixing opioids with other drugs, which is a common practice. In the worst case scenario, naloxone will simply do nothing, but in the best case scenario it will save a life.

Will naloxone hurt someone?

Serious side effects of naloxone are very rare. The most common side effect is opioid withdrawal, since naloxone ejects the opioids from their receptors in the brain. The risk of withdrawal increases with larger doses of naloxone as well as the strength of a person's drug dependency. Common opioid withdrawal symptoms include aches, irritability, sweating, runny nose, diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting.

Still, the potential complications of opioid overdose are more alarming, including lung and heart problems, brain damage caused by prolonged lack of oxygen, and eventually, death. Giving someone naloxone will help restore breathing and lessen the risk of these outcomes.

Will naloxone make you high? Can you overdose on it?

No. The only effect of naloxone is to reverse the effect of opioids. It cannot make you high: if you are not using opioids, an injection of naloxone would feel the same as an injection of water. Naloxone has no potential for abuse.

It is not possible to overdose on naloxone.

Will naloxone stop buprenorphine (Suboxone) overdose?

Yes. It is possible to overdose on buprenorphine, a medicine used in opioid substitution treatment. There is, however, less risk of overdose than with other opioids.

Most buprenorphine overdoses involve intravenous injection and/or combination of buprenorphine with other drugs, particularly sedatives,

benzodiazepines or neuroleptics. Unfortunately, naloxone doesn't work as well for buprenorphine as it does for most other opioids. This has to do with the ways the brain's receptors react to these drugs. A slow, continuous infusion of naloxone seems to work best for overdoses of these drugs, but this is not practical outside of a healthcare setting.

Will naloxone work even if someone has previously used it?

Yes. You cannot develop tolerance to naloxone, so it can be used in every opioid overdose situation no matter how many times a person has overdosed in the past. People may respond to naloxone differently each time but this is often more likely due to how old the naloxone is, how it has been stored, what type of drugs the person took and in what dose or combination.

Is naloxone the same as naltrexone?

No. Naltrexone is like naloxone but it lasts much longer, generally about 24 hours. It is sometimes used in the treatment of drug or alcohol dependence.

Can naloxone be safely used if it is expired?

Naloxone loses its impact over time as well as from too much heat or cold, or exposure to sunlight. Expired naloxone will not hurt the victim, but probably does not work as well as new naloxone. If an overdose victim is given expired naloxone because that is all that is available, the victim may require additional doses as a result of decreased potency.

To make sure it lasts as long as possible, naloxone should be kept in a dark and dry place between 25°C/80°F and 5°C/40°F if possible. But it is important to have it at hand when an overdose might happen.

Internet Links

Naloxone Info: naloxoneinfo.org/get-started/about-naloxone
Project Lazarus: projectlazarus.org/

Treatment Options for Opioid Addiction: findtreatment.samhsa.gov

Participating pharmacies

Elkin/Jonesville: D-Rex Pharmacy: 450 Winston Rd., Jonesville, NC 28642 Phone: 336-835-6407, Fax: 336-526-8329

King: King Drug Company: 142 S. Main St., King, NC 27021, Phone: 336-983-3147, Fax: 336-985-0615

Lexington: Tyro Family Pharmacy, 4320 S NC Hwy. 150, Lexington, NC 27295 Phone: 336-853-2744, Fax: 336-853-5915

Mt. Airy: Gates Pharmacy : N. South St., Mount Airy, NC 27030, Phone: 336-789-5050, Fax: 336-786-7169

Mocksville: Foster Drug Company : 495 Valley Rd., Mocksville, NC 27028, Phone: 336-751-2141, Fax: 336-751-7974

Thomasville: Thomasville Family Pharmacy, 116 Lexington Ave., Thomasville, NC 27360 Phone: 336-313-6143, Fax: 336-313-6145

Wilkesboro: Brame Huie Pharmacy, 1920 W. Park Dr., North Wilkesboro, NC 28659 Phone: 336-838-8988, Fax: 336-838-1711

Winston-Salem: MLK Pharmacy: 1489 New Walkertown Rd., W-S, NC 27101 Phone: 336-722-0077, Fax: 336-722-0051

South Park Family Pharmacy, 1215A W. Clemmons Rd., W-S, NC 27127 Phone: 336-293-4755, Fax: 336-293-4765

Yadkinville: Yadkin Valley Pharmacy, 207-A Ash St., Yadkinville, NC 27055, Phone: 336-677-5000, Fax: 336-677-5010