
Naloxone Quick Start Guide

Use this guide as a stepwise approach to identify naloxone candidates, get them started on naloxone, and get on with your day.

This quick start guide is based on our FAQ, *Meds for Opioid Overdose*, which you can consult for additional information.

1. **Identify** naloxone candidates. These are generally people:
 - with a history of opioid intoxication or overdose, or who may have a history of substance abuse or nonmedical opioid use.
 - taking methadone, buprenorphine, or naltrexone for opioid use disorder.
 - taking 50 mg or more of oral morphine or its equivalent daily, or a long-acting opioid.
 - being switched from one opioid to another (due to risk of incomplete cross-tolerance).
 - taking an opioid and who also smoke; have a respiratory illness (e.g., COPD, sleep apnea, asthma, etc); have renal, hepatic, or heart disease; have HIV; use alcohol or take a benzodiazepine, sedative, or antidepressant; who live in a remote location.
 - who request it.

Note: Most states now allow prescribing of naloxone to a caregiver or family member (see footnote), but insurance might not cover it.
2. **Talk** to the patient/caregiver about naloxone. Explain that:
 - Naloxone can save lives if the patient or someone else who gets access to the patient’s opioid (e.g., a child) overdoses. Overdoses can happen accidentally in patients not abusing opioids. Naloxone is like a seatbelt: most people don’t need it, but it’s there if they ever do need it.
 - Having naloxone available does not encourage opioid misuse and may even reduce it.
 - Naloxone is easy to use, has a low risk of adverse effects, and is not harmful if the person didn’t really need it.
 - In the **US**, “Good Samaritan” laws are being drafted and passed to protect bystanders who administer naloxone (see footnote). **Canada** passed a “Good Samaritan” law in 2017.
3. **Contact** the prescriber for a naloxone prescription, if required.
 - **US:** Naloxone can be purchased without a prescription (see footnote).
 - **Canada:** Naloxone is available for purchase by anyone, but in some provinces, it must be sold at a pharmacy under the supervision of a pharmacist.
 - In the **US**, laws are being drafted and passed to protect prescribers who prescribe naloxone and pharmacists who dispense it (see footnote).
4. **Prescribe/Dispense** naloxone.
 - Our chart, *Meds for Opioid Overdose*, has information on getting naloxone paid for, getting paid for counseling patients about naloxone (prescribers), and how to write/dispense a prescription for a naloxone kit (i.e., naloxone vials and syringes or a nasal atomization device).
5. **Teach** the patient/caregiver how to use naloxone.
 - Patient instructions are included with the brand naloxone products (e.g., *Narcan* nasal spray, *S.O.S. Naloxone* [Canada]).
 - In the **US**, patient/caregiver training materials for naloxone use are available at <http://www.prescribetoprevent.org>.
 - Naloxone teaching materials and a teaching point checklist from the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia are available at <http://www.bcpharmacists.org/naloxone>.

Footnote: See <http://pdaps.org/datasets/laws-regulating-administration-of-naloxone-1501695139> and <https://naspa.us/resource/2022-state-fact-sheets/>.
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