



Naloxone

Answers to frequently asked questions

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Naloxone FAQ's

What is naloxone/Narcan?

Naloxone is a medicine that is an antidote to opioid drugs. Opioids can slow or stop a person's breathing, leading to death. Naloxone helps a person who has opioids in their body wake up and keep breathing. Naloxone is also known by the brand name Narcan.

Is naloxone safe?

Naloxone has been approved by the FDA to treat overdose since 1971. It is safe and non-addictive. Giving a person naloxone will only block opioid overdose and will not cause harm if they're experiencing a different kind of medical emergency or if they're overdosing on other drugs. It's always best to use it if you think someone is overdosing.

What if children find and use the naloxone?

Naloxone has no adverse effects, even on children. This medication simply kicks opioids off brain receptors temporarily to block an overdose. Naloxone will not harm children if you give it to them and they are not overdosing on an opioid. Naloxone is an opioid blocker, so it will not have an effect, positive or negative, on anything other than an opioid overdose.

How does naloxone work?

Opioid overdose kills people by slowing down the rate and depth of breathing. Naloxone blocks an overdose by binding to the opioid receptors in the brain just like opiate drugs do. Naloxone pushes opiates off the receptors and blocks them from reattaching, thus reversing their effects. Naloxone only blocks the effects of opioids for 30 to 90 minutes, but many opioids remain in the body for longer. This is why it's important to call 911 and remain with a person experiencing an overdose until help arrives.

Naloxone will **only** work if a person has opiates in their system. It will not stop the effects of other drugs, and will have no effect, harmful or otherwise, on someone who is not experiencing an opioid overdose.

How is naloxone administered?

Naloxone can be given in three ways. The Oak Park project utilizes an intranasal method, in which the drug is sprayed into the nose. It can also be injected through the clothing into the muscle (intramuscular) and intravenously.

How long does naloxone take to work?

Naloxone acts in two to three minutes. If the person does not regain consciousness in three minutes after receiving a dose of naloxone, they should be given a second dose.

What is likely to happen immediately after naloxone is administered to someone experiencing an opioid overdose?

The person who received the naloxone:

- Will regain full consciousness and will be confused.
- May feel sick and may vomit.

- Might go into “fight or flight” mode, depending on the circumstances. However, this is rare if naloxone is administered by someone they know and trust. This underscores the importance of increasing access to naloxone for the family and friends of opioid users.

Naloxone has recently become available without a prescription. Is it really safe?

Yes! In addition to the recent approval of over-the-counter sale of naloxone by the FDA, the risks of naloxone are so low that the American Medical Association, American Pharmacist Association, American Public Health Association, Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and World Health Organization have supported the availability of take-home naloxone.

Since naloxone is now available without a prescription, why can't people get it at the store?

Out of pocket cost without insurance for naloxone can be as high as \$140 per box of two doses. This cost presents a significant barrier in accessing naloxone. Also, due to the stigma around drug use, people who experience opioid use disorder may be hesitant to purchase naloxone in person at their local store. Distribution of naloxone for free in a way that allows people to remain anonymous will increase the number of doses available in the community.

Another benefit of receiving naloxone through this program is the instruction in how to use naloxone, which is provided through in-person trainings, written instructions, and video. Also, every naloxone kit distributed will include information on how to access care and recovery services.

Legal Concerns FAQ

I am not a medical professional. Can I really determine if someone has overdosed and give naloxone?

Giving naloxone to a person who is not overdosing will not cause harm.

Signs of an overdose are:

- Shallow breathing
- Pinpoint pupils
- Loss of consciousness/unresponsiveness
- Blue lips or skin tone

What if I give someone naloxone and something goes wrong – can I be sued?

The Illinois Drug Overdose Prevention Program Law (PA 096-0361, 2010) empowers non-medical professionals, including family, friends, and other community members, to administer naloxone to prevent a fatal opioid overdose without risking any civil or criminal liability.

Will people be arrested for drug possession if they call 911 during an overdose?

Illinois has a “Good Samaritan” law (officially called the Emergency Medical Services Access Law of 2012) in place to encourage people to seek emergency medical help when someone is overdosing. If a person calls 911 or takes someone to an emergency room for an overdose (or for follow-up care if an overdose has already been blocked with naloxone), both the person seeking emergency help and the person who overdoses are protected from being charged/prosecuted for felony possession of fewer than 3 grams of heroin, fewer than three grams of morphine, or fewer than 40 grams of prescription opioids.

Drug Use and Naloxone FAQ

Does naloxone encourage people to misuse drugs?

Numerous studies on naloxone's effect on drug use have shown that having naloxone available does not lead to more drug use or riskier drug use. Furthermore, naloxone causes opiate withdrawal symptoms, which can act as an effective deterrent.

Is naloxone the same as methadone?

No. Naloxone immediately stops an overdose. Methadone is part of a treatment plan to help people stop using opioids. Oak Park's project is centered on naloxone.

Will naloxone keep people who need treatment from seeking it?

Studies have shown that naloxone does not keep users from seeking treatment. In fact, for many people, the experience of a drug overdose encourages them to seek treatment.

Do I still need to call 911 after administering naloxone?

Yes. Additional medical treatment may be needed to save the person's life. One of the cornerstones of naloxone and overdose response training is the importance of calling 911 and emphasizing that naloxone will only block the overdose for 30-90 minutes.

Opioids and Naloxone in Oak Park FAQ

Is opioid use really an issue in Oak Park?

In 2022, 151 people in Oak Park experienced an opioid overdose. That means that someone in Oak Park overdoses due to opioid use almost every other day. The CDC calls opioid overdose an epidemic. Nationally, the number of opioid overdoses has increased more than eight times since 1999. In 2019, 10.1 million U.S. residents (3.7% of the population) reported nonmedical use of an opioid. Of those, the majority reported misusing prescription opioids.

Will increasing access to naloxone in the community attract people who misuse drugs to Oak Park?

People who use opioids are already in Oak Park. They are our neighbors, family members, and friends. Common prescription opioids include: hydrocodone (Vicodin®), oxycodone (OxyContin®, Percocet®), oxymorphone (Opana®), morphine (Kadian®, Avinza®), and codeine. Any opioid use puts individuals at risk of accidental overdose and developing opioid use disorder. It's important to elevate the conversation around opioids, increase access to naloxone, and train more people how to use it to protect our loved ones and neighbors.

This project would not create the need to come to Oak Park for the sole purpose of accessing naloxone because free naloxone is already available in Oak Park and in many of our surrounding communities through programs like [The Chicago Recovery Alliance](#), [Live4Lali](#), and [The West Side Heroin/Opioid Task Force](#).

Additional locations to find free naloxone in the region and state:

[Find Narcan Near You! \(arcgis.com\)](#)

[Opioid Data Dashboard \(illinois.gov\)](#)

Will increasing access to naloxone in the community increase the number of unhoused people in Oak Park?

Due to stigma, it is commonly believed that opioid users are unhoused. Many Oak Park residents have been prescribed opioids, providing the opportunity for accidental overdose and to develop opioid use disorder.

EpiPens for severe allergic reactions seem just as important for saving lives. Why isn't Oak Park distributing EpiPens?

Epinephrine is a medication that must be prescribed. Oak Park Fire Department personnel, who are specially trained, carry epinephrine to be administered in emergencies when necessary. Due to the potential for severe side effects, including trouble breathing, increased heart rate or stroke, EpiPens should only be used by medical professionals or individuals who have a prescription.

Individuals who are at risk of opioid overdose should also have access to life-saving medication. Fortunately, naloxone is very safe and does not have severe side effects, even when administered on an individual who is not experiencing overdose.

I'm still not sure we should be using our local tax dollars on this project.

Expenses for project materials are funded by the [Illinois Opioid Allocation Agreement](#), through which settlement funds from opioid manufacturers and distributors are distributed to states for use in combatting the opioid epidemic.

Sources

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[Will FDA recommendation to make naloxone available OTC curb overdose deaths? | University of Michigan News \(umich.edu\)](#)

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[Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing Opioid Overdose: What's Working in the United States, 2018 \(cdc.gov\)](#)

Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-Based Epidemics (ESSENCE)

- number of overdoses in Oak Park

[Find Narcan Near You! \(arcgis.com\)](#)

[Opioid Data Dashboard \(illinois.gov\)](#)

[Illinois Opioid Allocation Agreement](#)

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