



Naloxone FAQ

What is Naloxone?

Naloxone is a prescription medication sometimes called Narcan. It is an antidote medication for opioids, like heroin and certain pain killers. This means that it can reverse the effects of opioid medications, including overdoses. Naloxone is a safe medication with no abuse potential. Because of Act 139, a 2014 Pennsylvania state law, any individual likely to witness an overdose can legally administer it. As long as you have a prescription or access to a pharmacy using a standing order, you don't need to be a healthcare professional to give someone the drug.

What are Opioids?

Opioids are a class of medications that are commonly used to decrease pain. Some opioids are illegal, such as heroin. Other opioids are prescription medications, such as morphine, oxycodone (Oxycontin), methadone, hydrocodone (Vicodin), codeine, and others.

How does Naloxone work?

Naloxone can rapidly reverse the effects of an opioid. This means that it can be used successfully to reverse an overdose of either prescription opioids or illegal opioids (heroin) within minutes. Side effects from Naloxone are rare.

What are the signs of an overdose?

If you suspect someone is having an overdose, giving Naloxone can be the difference between life and death. Watch for these signs of an overdose:

- *Awake, but unable to speak*
- *Body is limp*
- *Skin is pale or clammy*
- *Fingernails and lips turn blue or purple*
- *Breathing is slow, shallow, or stopped*
- *Heartbeat is slow, erratic, or stopped*
- *Choking or gurgling noise*
- *Loss of consciousness or unresponsive*

The administration of Naloxone to someone who is not actually having an overdose will not further endanger them.

How is Naloxone given?

Naloxone is administered in one of three ways. It can be (1) injected into a vein or muscle (even through clothing), (2) sprayed into the nose, or (3) administered via auto-injector, which includes voice instructions. Your pharmacist can provide detailed instructions on how to administer naloxone. Note that Health Department Director Dr. Karen Hacker's standing order for Naloxone only applies to methods (2) and (3), into the nose or via auto-injector, respectively.

Where can I purchase naloxone and do I need a prescription from a doctor?

The Allegheny County Health Department website (<http://www.achd.net/topic-overdose.html>) contains a list of pharmacies where you can purchase naloxone without a prescription. If you do have a prescription, you can go to any pharmacy and ask about availability.

What is the cost of Naloxone?

The exact cost of Naloxone depends on your insurance plan. Most insurance, Medicaid, and Medicare cover the cost of the Naloxone, but this designation may vary by plan. Check with your pharmacist regarding specific plan coverages. The cost of the nasal adapter is not covered by insurance, but is no more than a few dollars.

There are also options for those where cost or insurance is an issue. The Allegheny County Health Department Immunization Clinic offers Intra-nasal naloxone kits for sale at cost; customers may call 412-578-8081 for current pricing. Prevention Point Pittsburgh also offers injectable naloxone kits (intra-muscular only) at no cost; they may be reached at 412-247-3404.

For more information, visit --

The Allegheny County Health Department: <http://www.achd.net/overdoseprotection/index.html>

Prevention Point Pittsburgh: <http://www.pppgh.org/>

Prescribe to Prevent. Org: <http://prescribetoprevent.org/>

Overdose Free PA: <http://overdosefreepa.org/>