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- Prescription opioids are usually used to provide pain relief.
- Opioids should only be used as prescribed and should not be combined with other substances that cause sleepiness or slow your breathing.
- Signs of an overdose include slowed breathing, blue/grey lips, fingernails, and skin, and deep sleep.
- Naloxone is a medication that can treat opioid overdose when given right away.

What are Opioids?

Opioids are a type of medication that include some prescription pain relievers, illegal drugs of abuse (e.g., heroin), and synthetic opioids such as fentanyl.¹

Common Opioid Medications²

- Codeine (Tylenol with Codeine #3[®])
- Fentanyl (Duragesic[®])
- Hydrocodone (Norco[®], Lortab[®])
- Hydromorphone (Dilaudid[®])
- Methadone (Dolophine[®], Methadose[®])
- Morphine (MS Contin[®], Kadian[®])
- Oxycodone (OxyContin[®], Percocet[®])
- Oxymorphone (Opana[®])

What are they used for?

Opioids can be used to treat pain following some injuries or surgery.³

What are the risks of opioid use?

- May cause drowsiness which would make it dangerous to drive or operate heavy machinery.
- Taking too high of a dose or too many opioids can make a person pass out, stop breathing, and die.
- Opioids can be habit-forming and may lead to an opioid use disorder, especially with prolonged use.
- Tolerance to opioids can develop with daily use, which means that someone would need more of an opioid to feel the same pain relief.^{3,4}
- If a person stops taking opioids even for a few days, they can lose tolerance. They may be more likely to overdose if they take the same dose they used to take after being off opioids.

How can opioids be used safely?

- DO NOT mix opioids with
 - Alcohol
 - Benzodiazepines, like alprazolam (Xanax[®]) or lorazepam (Ativan[®]), unless directed by your provider
 - Additional opioids
 - Other medications that make you sleepy
- Take the opioid medication exactly as directed
- Ask your provider or pharmacist if you have any questions or concerns!

How to safely dispose of opioid medications

The best way to dispose of most types of unused, unwanted, or expired medicines is to drop the medication at a drug take back site, location, or program. Opioid prescriptions should not be flushed down the toilet. For more information on proper medication disposal please visit: <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/safe-disposal-medicines/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know>.

What is an Opioid Overdose?

Opioid overdose occurs when a person takes more opioids than the body can handle, which may cause someone to pass out, have trouble breathing, and sometimes die.⁴ Anyone taking opioids can have an accidental, life-threatening opioid overdose.

Signs of an Opioid Overdose⁴

- Dizziness and confusion
- Snoring, gurgling, or choking sounds
- Breathing is slow or has stopped
- Blue/grey lips, fingernails, or skin
- Deep sleep and person cannot be woken up

What is naloxone?

Naloxone (Narcan[®], Evzio[®]) is a medication to reverse effects of an opioid overdose and to help a person start breathing again.⁵ Naloxone is available as a nasal spray (Narcan[®]), auto-injector (Evzio[®]), and intramuscular injection. Naloxone nasal spray is available from a pharmacist without a prescription from a doctor and can now be found over the counter.

When should naloxone be used?

Naloxone should be used right away if there are signs or symptoms of an opioid overdose. If a person shows signs of an overdose but you are not sure what they took, naloxone should be given because an opioid overdose can cause severe injury or death. Naloxone is safe; so, there is little risk to the person if they receive naloxone but did not take an opioid.⁵ Since the effects of the opioid can often last longer than the effects of the naloxone, it is important to also follow up with emergency medical care as soon as possible after the naloxone dose has been given.

How quickly does naloxone work?

Naloxone works within 2 to 5 minutes. If a person does not respond to one dose of naloxone, you can give the second dose after 2-3 minutes.⁵

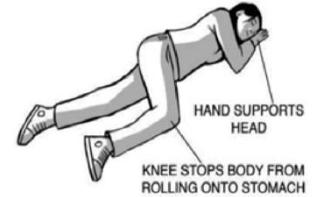
What if an overdose is suspected?

- Make sure the area is safe.
- Ask person if he or she is okay and shout their name.
- Shake shoulders and firmly rub the middle of the chest (use your knuckles on the bone in center of the chest where the ribs connect).





- Call 911 or Emergency Services.
- Check for signs of an opioid overdose (examples include slowed breathing, blue/grey lips, fingernails, and skin, and deep sleep).
- Administer naloxone if you have it. Give a second dose if the person hasn't started breathing after 2-3 minutes after the first dose.
- Move the person on their side to prevent choking if the person vomits
- Stay with the person until help arrives. Additional doses of naloxone may be required because the medication generally lasts 30 to 90 minutes



The Wake Up

- When someone wakes up after receiving naloxone, they may not know what happened and may not feel well. Gently tell them what happened and that help is on the way to prevent them from becoming uncomfortable and confused.
- Check for signs of an opioid overdose.

Good Samaritan Law

- Many individuals may not call for medical assistance for fear of being arrested for drug-related crimes.
- The Good Samaritan law creates legal protection for those individuals who are using but also protects carriers of naloxone who use it in good faith.
- Check to see if you live in a state that has a Good Samaritan Law: <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-21-248>



Go online to find more information about opioid risks and overdoses and to view the references for this toolkit.

aapp.org/428341