

Frequently Asked Questions about Naloxone for the General Public

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1) What is naloxone? How does it work?

Naloxone is an opioid antagonist that is used to temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, namely slowed or stopped breathing. Naloxone is safe to give in the event of a suspected opioid overdose and, when given in time, can save a life. Naloxone can be administered nasally or by injection into a muscle or below the skin to a person suspected of an overdose.

Naloxone will not reverse overdoses from other drugs, such as alcohol, benzodiazepines, cocaine, or amphetamines. More than one dose of naloxone may be needed to reverse some opioid overdoses. Naloxone alone may be inadequate if someone has taken large quantities of opioids, very potent opioids or long-acting opioids. For this reason, always call 9-1-1 and seek emergency medical assistance in the event of a suspected overdose. An overdose is a life-threatening medical emergency.

2) What is Narcan? How does it differ from naloxone?

Narcan® is a brand-name form of the drug naloxone. Narcan® and naloxone are chemically identical. Narcan is formulated as a nasal 4 mg spray; nasal 4 mg naloxone is also available as a generic. Other brand-name formulations include Zimhi® (autoinjector), RiVive (nasal 3 mg), Rextoxy (nasal 4mg) and Kloxxado (nasal 8 mg).

3) What are signs/symptoms of opioid overdose?

The primary symptoms of an opioid overdose are lack of response to stimuli such as pinching, shaking or calling the person's name loudly; pinpoint pupils; and lack of or very shallow, slow breathing. Always call 9-1-1 if you suspect that an overdose has occurred.

4) Do I need a prescription to purchase naloxone?

No. There are two ways individuals may purchase nasal naloxone without a prescription: over-the-counter or via [statewide standing order](#).

Over-the-counter (OTC)

Narcan®, a 4mg nasal spray form of naloxone, is now available as an OTC product. A generic naloxone nasal 4 mg spray is also available OTC. Individuals can purchase these forms of naloxone without using Virginia's standing order or receiving a prescription from a medical provider.

Statewide Standing Order

The State Health Commissioner has issued a [statewide standing order](#) that authorizes pharmacists who maintain a current active pharmacist license to dispense naloxone in accordance with the Virginia Drug Control Act, §54.1-3408, and the current Board of Pharmacy-approved protocol. The standing order, protocol and REVIVE! educational materials are located on the [VDH Website](#). In essence, the standing order serves as a prescription written for the general public, rather than specifically for an individual.

5) Does the statewide standing order mean that naloxone is free for patients?

No. The standing order does not remove the cost of the drug. The out-of-pocket cost for prescription naloxone nasal spray ranges between \$30 and \$45 for a two-dose unit of naloxone 4mg, or \$70 and \$170 for a two-dose unit of naloxone 8mg. Individuals may use prescription insurance to offset the cost of naloxone. Cost is subject to individual insurance plan copays and deductibles.

6) Do any health insurance plans help with the cost?

Health insurance drug plans can vary greatly, and many do pay some portion of the cost. Please contact your health insurance provider to determine if they will cover naloxone. If you do not have insurance, ask your pharmacist about any discounts or coupons from the pharmacy or drug maker. The Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) and its Medicaid health plans cover naloxone at no cost to members.

7) Will naloxone administration training be required to purchase OTC Narcan?

Naloxone administration training for OTC Narcan® is not required but is recommended. Access naloxone training through the DBHDS [REVIVE! Opioid Overdose and Naloxone Education \(OONE\)](#) Program for the Commonwealth of Virginia or learn more about opioids and naloxone here: [Opioid Education | NARCAN® \(naloxone HCl\) Nasal Spray](#)

8) I need naloxone but I cannot afford the medication. Is there a way to obtain no-cost naloxone?

Many local health districts dispense naloxone kits at REVIVE! training events, during walk-in clinic hours and at other community events. Check with your [local health department](#) to determine how and when you may be able to obtain naloxone at no cost.

9) How is naloxone generally dispensed by a pharmacist?

The standing order allows the pharmacist to dispense either two prefilled syringes in a kit for nasal use, a twin pack that contains two intramuscular naloxone auto-injectors or a twin pack that contains two naloxone nasal sprays. The standing order also allows pharmacists to dispense a twin pack that contains two nasal sprays of nalmefene, another opioid antagonist. It is important to read and follow the instructions provided with the naloxone that you receive so that you know how to use it. Ask your pharmacist if you have any questions about the product.

10) Will a pharmacist counsel me on using this medication?

If dispensed through the pharmacy, the pharmacist may provide counseling which covers prevention, recognition, response of opioid overdose and administration of naloxone. Individuals are always encouraged to ask their pharmacist questions about their medications, including naloxone.

11) Is there a waiting period between coming to get the naloxone and actually getting it?

No. However, it is possible that the pharmacy will need to order the drug if it is not in stock and/or dispensing the medication, which could create a minimal delay. It is advisable to contact the pharmacy prior to visiting.

12) Where can I learn how to administer naloxone to someone suspected of an overdose?

One of the best ways for the public to learn about the use of naloxone is through the REVIVE! training course. Learn more on the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services website [here](#).

13) What is REVIVE!?

REVIVE! is the Opioid Overdose and Naloxone Education (OONE) program for the Commonwealth of Virginia. REVIVE! provides training to professionals, stakeholders and others on how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose emergency with the administration of naloxone. REVIVE! is a collaborative effort led by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) working alongside VDH, the Virginia Department of Health Professions, community organizations and other stakeholders. More information can be found [here](#).

14) What kind of database am I entered into?

Individuals accessing prescription naloxone are required to provide information, including their name, which naloxone product they received and the date that they received naloxone; these will be reported to Virginia's Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP). Virginia's PMP is a database containing information on dispensed controlled substances included in Schedule II, III and IV; those in Schedule V for which a prescription is required; naloxone; and all other drugs of concern. The Virginia Department of Health Professions manages the PMP.

Individuals accessing OTC naloxone are not required to provide this information, and no information is reported to the PMP.

15) Who has access to my information?

This information is classified as protected health information (PHI) and is protected by federal laws that apply to PHI.

16) What accommodations can be made so my request for naloxone is private?

You have the right to request to speak to the pharmacist directly in a private setting.