



NARCAN:

What it is and when to consider its use.

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What is it?

Narcan (naloxone) is an over-the-counter (OTC) drug that's used to treat known or possible opioid overdose. Narcan comes as a nasal (nose) spray. Each container holds one dose of Narcan that's sprayed into one nostril.

Narcan is used in people of all ages if opioid overdose happens or has possibly happened. An opioid overdose occurs when someone accidentally or intentionally takes more opioid than their body can safely process. Narcan is usually given by a caregiver or loved one if they think opioid overdose has occurred.

After Narcan has been given, 911 or your local emergency number should be called right away. Administering Narcan is not a substitute for emergency medical care for opioid overdose.

Narcan basics

Narcan contains the active drug naloxone. (An active drug is what makes a medication work.)

Narcan belongs to a group of drugs called opioid antagonists.

Narcan is a brand-name drug that's also available as the generic drug naloxone.

In March 2023, the Food and Drug Administration approved Narcan for over-the-counter use.

This means Narcan is available without a prescription. It can be purchased at many pharmacies.

When it is used

If takes an opioid medication, a doctor may suggest that you have Narcan available. (Opioids are medications used for pain.)

Narcan is used in people of all ages if opioid overdose happens or has possibly happened.

Narcan may be given by a caregiver if they think opioid overdose has occurred.

Narcan treats opioid overdose by blocking certain receptors (attachment sites) in the body that opioids bind to. Blocking these receptors helps reverse symptoms of opioid overdose. Once the receptors are blocked, the symptoms may quickly ease.

Symptoms of opioid overdose may include:

- [unconsciousness](#) (unable to be awakened, even if shaken or shouted at)
- [slow heart rate](#)
- [low blood pressure](#)
- [slow, shallow breathing or breathing that has stopped](#)
- [smaller than usual pupils](#) (the dark, center portion of your eye)

A doctor may recommend availability of Narcan if a drug has been taken with an opioid in it.

Many pain medications contain opioids, including:

- [fentanyl](#)
- [methadone](#) (Dolophine, Methadose)
- [oxycodone](#) (Oxycontin)

- [hydrocodone](#) (Vicodin)

College and University Use

As colleges and universities grapple with how to tackle the national opioid crisis as it spills onto campuses across the country. Several higher education institutions have initiated efforts to make naloxone more widely available on their campuses and raise awareness of the epidemic so overdose deaths can be prevented.

Sources credited and for more information, please consult:

All About Narcan Nasal Spray

[Narcan: Dosage, How It's Given, How It Works, Uses, and More](#)

Preventing Opioid Overdoses on Campuses: The Naloxone Solution

[Preventing Opioid Overdoses on Campuses: The Naloxone Solution - AGB](#)

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