



Take Home Naloxone Program FAQ for Health Professionals

Question: *What is Naloxone?*

Answer: Naloxone is an antidote to an opioid overdose. An overdose of opioid drugs such as fentanyl, morphine, heroin, methadone, or oxycodone can cause a person's breathing to slow or stop. Naloxone is an injectable medication that can reverse this so the person can breathe normally and regain consciousness. Naloxone does not work for overdoses such as cocaine, ecstasy, GHB or alcohol. However, if an overdose involves multiple substances including opioids, naloxone will help by temporarily reversing the effects of the opioid.

- Naloxone does not get a person intoxicated/stoned/high, quite the opposite.
- Naloxone is not poisonous, and causes NO harm if swallowed.
- Naloxone is very safe – the only contraindication is hypersensitivity to the medication.
- Naloxone is a 'Prescription Only Medication' and is currently only licensed in Canada for administration by intramuscular injection

Question: *Who qualifies for a kit? Can family or friends get a kit for someone who uses opiates if they refuse to come for the training?*

Answer: Anyone with a current or past history of opioid use will meet the criteria for a prescription of a Naloxone kit. At this time, family and friends do not qualify.

Question: *Where are kits available for the public?*

Answer: Kits are available through a prescription from a health professional and are prescribed to individuals who have a history of opioid use. Health professionals provide hands-on training for all individuals prescribed a kit. To find an agency or a location prescribing take home kits visit: www.drugsfool.ca

Question: *What can individuals do in case of an opioid overdose without naloxone?*

Answer: Call 911 and start rescue breathing. Opioid overdose results in death because the person who has overdosed stops breathing. The most important thing you can do if someone is not breathing is breathe for him/her until medical help arrives or he/she starts breathing on their own again.

Question: *Can Naloxone cause harm or be abused?*

Answer: Naloxone is a very safe drug. It has been approved for use in Canada for over 40 years and is on the World Health Organization List of Essential Medicines. Naloxone only works to block the effects of opioids in the brain and cannot get a person high. For individuals who are

dependent on opioids it may cause them to go into withdrawal. Naloxone has no effect on someone who has no opioids in their system.

Question: *Can only medical professionals recognize an opioid overdose and inject naloxone?*

Answer: Research and experience shows that if people are given basic training they are able to recognise an overdose and administer naloxone safely and effectively.

Question: *Can someone overdose on crack/coke be given naloxone?*

Answer: Naloxone will not work on a cocaine overdose, only opioid overdose. If it is a cocaine overdose that also involves opioids, naloxone may help. Naloxone will have no effect on someone who has no opioids in their system. Cocaine overdose is dangerous because it is not dose-dependent and is a complicated medical emergency — call 911.

Question: *Is expired naloxone effective?*

Answer: Like most medication, naloxone will start to lose its effectiveness after the expiry date. However, it may be strong enough to reverse an overdose if that is the only kit that is available. It is not toxic so use it and continue to perform rescue breathing. However, it is important to replace the naloxone as soon as you use it or it is out of date. You will not be required to complete the training again if it is still within 1 year of your previous training.

Question: *Where can I find more information?*

Answer: www.drugsfool.ca or call Health Link at 811