

Frequently Asked Questions for Pharmacists

Community based naloxone is an evidence-based response to the opioid overdose crisis, as a lifesaving antidote administered by members of the public. Pharmacies began participating in the Community Based Naloxone (CBN) program (formerly Take Home Naloxone) in January 2016, and their involvement has grown ever since. As of March 2019, approximately 1,145 pharmacies have distributed over 41,000 naloxone kits to Albertans since the program was first launched. Over 147,000 Naloxone Kits have been distributed across Alberta by over 1,950 community sites to date.

Pharmacists play an important role in the wellness of patients, friends, and family impacted by substance use and are key partners of the Community Based Naloxone Program. The following frequently asked questions can provide helpful information when distributing Naloxone Kits and saving lives across Alberta. Further information to guide practice can be found at: abpharmacy.ca/naloxone. The Alberta Pharmacists' Association (RxA) provides online training for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy assistants and can be accessed at no charge at www.rxa.ca/professional-development/community-based-naloxone-program.aspx.

Does the Community Based Naloxone Program require personal identifiers to receive a Naloxone Kit?

The Community Based Naloxone Program does not require community sites to collect personal identifiers to provide a Naloxone Kit. Naloxone Kits are available free of charge to members of the public at risk of experiencing or likely to witness an opioid poisoning. Some individuals may feel uncomfortable or be unable to provide personal identifiers. The intent of the CBN program is to ensure people who need a Naloxone Kit do not face barriers accessing naloxone. Information on submitting an anonymous claim is found in Benefact # 715 (December 2017), available here: www.ab.bluecross.ca/pdfs/pharmacy-benefacts/pharmacy-benefact-715.pdf

Can I give someone a Naloxone Kit if they refuse training?

Yes, a Naloxone Kit can be provided without training. However, every effort should be made to provide training so that the kits can be used effectively and successfully. It is important to offer the full training, but it should not be a barrier to obtaining a Naloxone Kit, if a person declines training. In these circumstances, consider providing these individuals with written materials. Individuals requesting Naloxone Kits should always be asked if they have any questions, regardless if it is a replacement kit

Am I responsible for ensuring all pharmacy staff have the proper training?

Pharmacy licensees should ensure that all pharmacy staff who will be interacting with individuals requesting Naloxone Kits have been fully trained and have a basic understanding of

the kits, stigma avoidance, and how a kit may be obtained anonymously. Training resources can be found at: www.rxa.ca/professional-development/community-based-naloxone-program.aspx.

How do I provide comprehensive training?

Training on how to teach individuals to use the Naloxone Kit correctly is essential. It should include (but is not limited to):

- how to identify an opioid overdose or poisoning
- the importance of rescue breathing
- when to administer naloxone
- the importance of calling 911 for medical assistance due to the short half-life of the drug
- how to prepare the dose for administration by withdrawing the dose from the vial
- how to landmark on the thigh or deltoid and administer an intramuscular injection
- when to use the second and third vial of naloxone
- the recovery position
- what to tell the person after reversal
- what to do after the reversal (disposal, kit replacement, and reporting kit use anonymously) proper storage of naloxone (away from direct light and between 15-30°Celsius). It is also important to let them know that if the naloxone is stored outside the recommended temperature range, or if it is expired, it may still be effective and appropriate to use, especially if it is the only naloxone available

What is important to know about VanishPoint syringes?

VanishPoint syringes are a feature of the Naloxone Kits. They are safety engineered devices that prevent reuse of needles and, thus, prevent disease transmission and injury. Once the plunger is fully depressed, the needle is retracted into the barrel and the syringe can be safely discarded in a sharps or tamper-proof container. If someone is not familiar with this type of needle, they may accidentally depress the plunger and prematurely activate the safety mechanism. This is an important teaching point that must be discussed when providing someone with a kit.

Can I provide a kit to a minor or youth?

An individual under the age of 18 can be assessed, considered a mature minor and provide consent without the input of their legal representative. A Mature Minor must be able to understand and appreciate the nature, risks and consequences of a proposed treatment/procedure including its ethical, emotional, and physical aspects. The CBN Program has a useful tool to help decide if a youth fits the mature minor criteria:

www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-mature-minor-assessment-for-overdose-response-kit-naloxone-kit-distribution.pdf .

Can a pharmacy supply an organization or business with multiple Naloxone Kits?

Currently, Naloxone Kits are publicly funded for distribution to members of the public at risk of an opioid overdose or likely to witness an opioid overdose. Naloxone Kits are not publicly funded for workplace use at this time. Employers are responsible for the purchase of naloxone for workplace use. Individuals representing groups or organizations requesting Naloxone Kits from pharmacies for use in the workplace should be referred to the CBN Program at naloxone.kit@ahs.ca for support with finding a solution.

How can someone report that a Naloxone Kit has been used and why do we collect this information?

When a Naloxone Kit has been used during an overdose response, it is important for information to be collected about the overdose and Naloxone Kit usage. When someone returns to the pharmacy to obtain a replacement kit, please provide a copy of the Naloxone Kit Usage Survey form and ask them to complete it in any capacity they can (i.e., with as much information as they are willing and comfortable to provide). Alternatively, the pharmacy staff can assist with completion of the form and submit it on behalf of the individual. Forms can be submitted online, by fax, or by email. Forms do not need to be completed in full and do not require any identifiers. Information contributes to our data about the CBN Program. This information is used to improve program efforts and revise the kits as needed. The Naloxone Kit Usage Survey form can be found at www.ahs.ca/naloxone.

What can I do if an individual asks questions about where to get help for substance use?

A complete listing of treatment clinics for opioid dependence in Alberta can be found by visiting www.ahs.ca/services/odp.aspx. For more information, and to find a service that meets a patient's specific needs, the 24-hour Addiction Helpline is available at 1-866-332-2322.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the Community Based Naloxone Program?

The Alberta Health Services Harm Reduction Services Team (HRST) was created in May 2018 to provide community and organizational support with respect to distribution of Naloxone Kits and a harm reduction approach. The team is focused on enhancement of the Community Based Naloxone (CBN) Program and supporting implementation of harm reduction services across the province in all areas of service delivery. The CBN program is operated by the HRST, and any questions related to CBN can be sent to naloxone.kit@ahs.ca; emails are checked frequently and forwarded to the most appropriate team member, usually a zone lead, who will be able to provide individualized support to pharmacists and pharmacies.

How do I find harm reduction resources in my community?

Harm reduction refers to policies, programs, and practices that aim to promote safety and reduce harms associated with the use of psychoactive substances without necessarily reducing the substance use itself. It is an evidence-based, ethical, and compassionate public health response to substance use. Harm reduction services such as needle distribution, supervised consumption services, and naloxone programs benefit individuals who use substances, their family and the community they live in. If you are interested in providing further harm reduction services, learning more about your local resources, or have any questions about any other harm reduction issue, you can contact the Harm Reduction Services Team at harm.reduction@ahs.ca or visit www.ahs.ca/harmreduction.