



Reversing an Opioid Overdose with Narcan

You've probably heard about the untimely death of Philip Seymour Hoffman, fentanyl-laced heroin overdoses, and the recent rise in heroin use. Perhaps someone you know personally is struggling with drug use. What you might not have heard about is Narcan (Naloxone). Your knowing about narcan could save a life.

What is Narcan? Narcan is a prescription medication that reverses an opioid overdose, regardless of whether that opioid is a street drug like heroin, or a prescription drug like oxycontin, vicodin, or percocet. Narcan is available in different forms. The most common types are an injection and an intranasal mist.

How do I get Narcan? Connecticut law allows prescribers (physicians, surgeons, PAs, APRNs, dentists and podiatrists) to prescribe narcan to any person to prevent or reverse an opioid overdose. Your family doctor should be able to give you a prescription, if not, call the DMHAS Community Call Line at 860-418-6962 for assistance.

How does Narcan work? When a person overdoses on opioids, their breathing slows down. The lack of oxygen over a 1 – 3 hour period is ultimately fatal, but it allows time to save them. Narcan reverses the overdose within a few minutes and lasts for 30 – 90 minutes, time for EMS to arrive.

How do I identify an opioid overdose? The person is unresponsive, not breathing or breathing less than 10 breaths/minute, has blue or gray lips and fingernails, and may be making loud, uneven snoring or gurgling sounds.

How do I respond to an opioid overdose? If you can't revive the person by shaking them or calling their name or using the "sternum rub" by rubbing your knuckles on their breastbone; then:

- 1. Call 911:** say the person isn't breathing/is struggling to breathe and provide the exact location of the victim.
- 2. Start rescue breathing:** this is just like the breathing part of CPR; tilt the head back and lift the chin to open the airway and pinch the nose to keep air from escaping, then give two normal breaths and then one breath every 5 seconds.
- 3. Administer Narcan: Intramuscular:**
Pop off plastic lid of vial.
Insert syringe in vial and remove 1cc by pulling down on the plunger.
Inject into shoulder or thigh by pushing the plunger in.
Administer Narcan: Intranasal:
Remove yellow cap atop plastic tube & screw atomizer on.
Remove bottom yellow cap & plastic cap from vial & screw the vial into bottom of tube.
Spray half the vial into each nostril by pushing vial up through tube.



4. Stay with the person if you can, if you must leave them alone then put them in the "recovery position" by rolling them onto their side. This will keep them from choking if they begin vomiting. The person will usually revive in 2 – 5 minutes. If they don't revive, then give a second dose of narcan. They will wake up in withdrawal from opioids due to the Narcan and should not be allowed to re-use opioids. They will probably not realize that they overdosed.

For more information, go to <http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/cwp/view.asp?a=2902&q=509650>