



Arizona has seen a sharp rise in opioid use and accidental overdose death.

It is important to understand what causes an overdose in the first place, and how to respond with naloxone to ensure survival if an overdose does occur.

WHAT IS AN OPIOID?

Opioids are a class of drugs that slow down the central nervous system. They include prescription painkillers like Vicodin, Percocet, Oxycodone, Dilaudid, Morphine, Methadone and Fentanyl. Heroin is also an opioid and has the same effect on the body.

WHAT IS AN OPIOID OVERDOSE?

When a person overdoses on opioids, their brain stops telling their lungs to breathe. This can happen immediately after using, or can take up to three hours. Once a person stops breathing, they can die within four minutes.

An overdose usually occurs for a few main reasons:

- Taking more opioids than the body can handle. Most frequently this happens after a person exits drug treatment, jail, or a setting where they had been abstinent from opioids.
- Mixing opioids with other depressants such as benzodiazepines (Valium, Xanax, etc.) and/or alcohol
- The opioids are stronger than a person thinks they will be, either because they are more pure, or mixed with potent opioids like fentanyl.



Signs of an overdose include

- The person is unconscious and not responding to a sternum rub or other physical stimuli
- Breathing is slow, shallow, or has stopped
- Snoring or gurgling may occur
- Lips, nails, or skin turn blue or gray

Steps to revive an overdose victim

1. Rub your knuckles hard on their sternum to wake them up. If they wake up, keep an eye on them and consider seeking medical attention. They may slip into an overdose if left alone. If they do not wake up, proceed to step 2.
2. Call 911. Let them know a person is not breathing and needs immediate medical attention.
3. Administer naloxone. Give the person one dose of naloxone. If they do not respond after two minutes, give them a second dose. Continue administering doses two minutes apart until the person responds.
4. While you are waiting for the naloxone to kick in, or if you do not have naloxone, breathe into the person's mouth. Tilt their head back, plug their nose, and give one deep breath every five seconds.

What is naloxone?

Naloxone, also known as Narcan, is an emergency response medication that is used to reverse an opioid overdose. It is a non-addictive prescription medication that has no side effects besides causing opioid withdrawal. Naloxone only works if a person has opioids in their system; the medication has no effect if opioids are absent. Although historically administered by emergency response personnel, naloxone can now be administered by minimally trained laypeople. There are four different naloxone devices and it can be given as an intramuscular injection or as a nasal spray.

Who should have naloxone?

Everybody! If you are at risk of an overdose because you use prescription opioids or heroin, you and the people you spend time with should have a naloxone kit just in case. Even if you take your pills as prescribed, somebody else in the household may ingest them and accidentally overdose. If you live with, work with, or spend time with people who are at risk for overdose, you should obtain naloxone.

Legal protections

HB 2355 (passed in 2016) allows a doctor to prescribe naloxone to a person at risk of an overdose or to a person who may be able to revive an overdose victim. If you carry or administer naloxone, you are legally protected and cannot be sued. The law also allows pharmacists to sell naloxone without a prescription.

How to get naloxone



DOCTOR

Ask your doctor for a prescription – most insurance will pay for it (including AHCCCS) with a prescription.

PHARMACY

You can also get it directly from the pharmacy without a prescription, and either bill your insurance or pay cash for it.



COMMUNITY

There are community organizations that give out free naloxone to people who have significant barriers to obtaining it.



If you or someone you know is at risk of overdose:

Please ask your doctor for a prescription for naloxone, talk to your pharmacist, or contact Sonoran Prevention Works for alternative ways to obtain naloxone.



www.spwaz.org

info@spwaz.org

480-442-7086

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OPIOID OVERDOSE PREVENTION AND NALOXONE

