

## Free, life-saving naloxone kits now available at Medical Arts Pharmacy

It's all over the news. In response to the crisis of opioid overdoses, pharmacies in Ontario have been identified as an ideal point of distribution for the naloxone kit.

The process started in March 2016 when Health Canada changed naloxone (Narcan) from a prescription to a non-prescription medication. And by June, the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities, or NAPRA, rescheduled naloxone from a schedule 1 to a schedule II medication.

Schedule II drugs do not require a prescription and are available strictly within pharmacies where a pharmacist's intervention is made mandatory by the Ontario College of Pharmacists.

A dose of naloxone works in 1 to 3 minutes and lasts 30 to 90 minutes. However, if the individual is not breathing or slow breathing after 3-5 minutes, a second dose of naloxone is recommended.

Policies are in place in the long-term care home settings where nurses are involved in the care of residents. These policies should be reviewed and may involve the following procedures:

### **Opioid Naïve (Has been taking regular doses of narcotic for less than 1 week)**

- Give Naloxone 0.4mg (=1ml) SC or IM x 1 dose
- Call 911 to have resident transfer to Emergency
- Repeat Naloxone 0.4mg (=1ml) SC or IM q 5 minutes PRN while waiting for ambulance

### **Opioid Long-Term (When reversal of respiratory depression is required without reversing the analgesia or causing withdrawal symptoms)**

- Give Naloxone 0.1mg (=0.25ml) SC or IM x 1 dose
- Call 911 to have resident transfer to Emergency
- Give Naloxone 0.1mg(=0.25ml) SC or IM q 5minutes PRN while waiting for ambulance

**Assist resident with CPR support. Depending on the half-lives of the opioids, consider the risk of recurrence of respiratory depression and unresponsiveness of the resident. As a general rule if no response is observed after 10mg total, consider other causes of respiratory depression.**

***The Naloxone kit contains the following:***

- Two ampoules of naloxone 0.4mg/ml (1ml ampoule)
- Two Safety syringes with 25G one inch needles attached
- One rescue breathing barrier- a plastic barrier that is used when administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
- One pair of non-latex gloves and alcohol swabs
- One naloxone identifier card- a card that can be filled out with the name of the person who has been trained in responding to opioid overdoses, the date the naloxone supplies were issued, and the expiry date of the naloxone.

***Providing Patient and/or Agent Education***

Pharmacists should ensure patients and/or agents requesting naloxone are also educated on such topics as:

- Harm reduction strategies when using opioids;
- How to identify an opioid overdose;
- Importance of immediately calling 9-1-1;
- Importance of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and how and when to give breaths;
- When and how to administer naloxone;
- Aftercare and the importance of staying with the person until emergency first responders arrive;
- Withdrawal symptoms occur following naloxone administration and reversal of the effects of the opioid overdose. Doses of naloxone administered via one or two vials or ampoules will, in most cases, only produce mild withdrawal symptoms and the benefits outweigh the risks associated with withdrawal;
- Naloxone may have variable efficacy in reversing the clinical effects of an overdose due to preparations containing buprenorphine (Suboxone);
- Naloxone is not effective against respiratory depression due to non-opioid drugs;
- Risk of secondary overdose if opioids used when patient regains consciousness.

Pharmacists must also provide educational information and the steps for dealing with an opioid overdose in writing to the patient and/or agent. Dispensing of naloxone kit requires a primary face to face pharmacist consultation.

If you are:

- Currently using opioids;
- A past opioid user who is at risk of returning to opioid use; or
- A family member, friend or other person in a position to assist a person at risk of overdose from opioids,

**Talk to your Medical Arts Pharmacist about the Take Home naloxone kit.**

***Resources:***

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/drugs/naloxone.aspx>

<http://www.ocpinfo.com/library/practice-related/download/Naloxone.pdf>

<https://www.opatoday.com/professional/resources/for-pharmacists/tools-and-forms/naloxone>

Newsletters are available at: [medicalartsparmacy.ca](http://medicalartsparmacy.ca)

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