

# Naloxone: Frequently Asked Questions

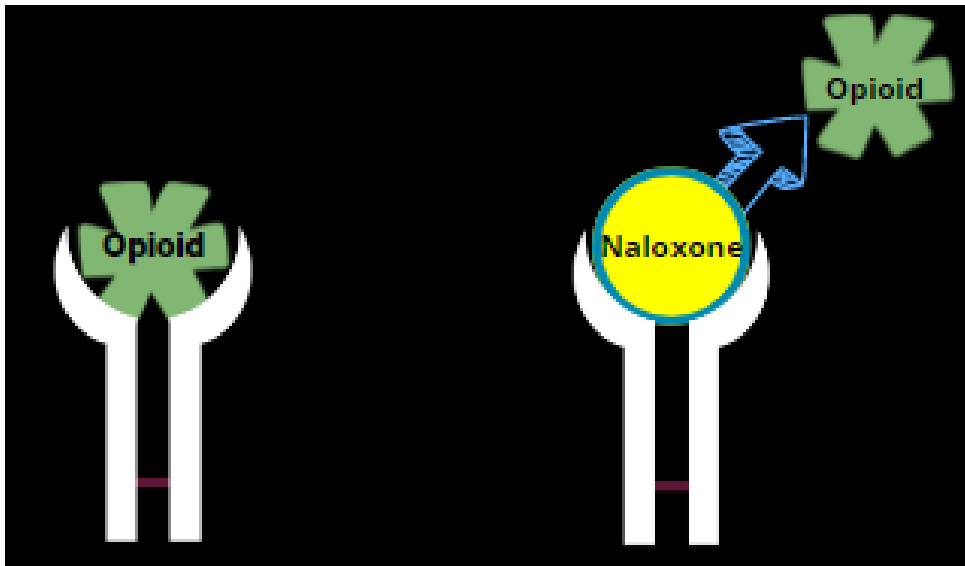
## Q1. What is Naloxone?

Naloxone (pronounced na-LOX-own) is a prescription medication used to temporarily reverse the effects of opioid drugs (for example heroin, morphine, codeine, methadone, nitazenes and fentanyl) if someone experiences an overdose.

Naloxone can help along with chest compressions to keep a person alive until an ambulance arrives.

## Q2. How does Naloxone work?

Naloxone works by displacing opioid molecules from their receptors in the brain.



- Opioid drugs fit into the brains receptors blocking the signals
- Breathing slows and stops
- The person becomes unconscious
- Naloxone has a stronger affinity to the brains receptors than opioids
- Naloxone temporarily knocks the opioids out of the brains receptors
- The brain signals resume and breathing starts again
- The person wakes up from the overdose

## Q3. How long does it take for naloxone to reverse the overdose?

It depends on each individual and the type/amount of opioids used but it **can** restore normal breathing within 2 to 3 minutes.

## Q4. How long does naloxone reverse the overdose for?



It is short acting lasting between approximately 20 and 90 minutes depending on which opioid was used.

## Q5. What types of naloxone are available?

Naloxone is available as an injection or a spray for the nose.

**Intramuscular Naloxone (brand name Prenoxad™)** is a 5 dose pre-filled syringe and 2 needles, the spare needle is in the box in case the other needle gets damaged. Once assembled it is injected into the outer thigh.

**Intranasal Naloxone (brand names Nyxoid™ and Ventizolve™ )** is a needle-free device that requires no assembly. Each pack contains two nasal sprays which contain one dose of naloxone they are sprayed into alternate nostrils.

 <p><b>Intramuscular</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each pack is for <b>SINGLE INDIVIDUAL USE</b> only</li> <li>• 5 doses of 0.4mg per dose</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Intranasal Spray</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each pack contains 2 nasal sprays</li> <li>• Each nasal spray is for <b>SINGLE INDIVIDUAL USE</b> only</li> <li>• Nyxoid 1.8mg per dose</li> <li>• Ventizolve 1.26mg per dose</li> </ul>
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**Q6. How many doses will I need to administer?**

It depends on each individual and the type/amount of opioids used.

- If the person is not breathing a further dose of naloxone should be administered after every 100 chest compressions until the emergency services arrive.
- If the person is breathing but not responding a further dose of naloxone should be administered every 2-3minutes until the emergency services arrive.

**Q7. How can I learn how to use naloxone?**

Please link in with a drugs treatment service, support program or your Doctor for more information and guidance on training available in your local area.

**Q8. Will naloxone help if the person has overdosed on drugs other than opioids?**

No, it only works to reverse an overdose involving opioids however is it better and safe to administer naloxone as street drugs can contain an opioid and naloxone will remove any opioid element to an overdose.

**Q9. If I don't know what the person used, should I administer naloxone anyway?**

Yes, naloxone will not adversely impact someone who has overdosed on other drugs or alcohol.

**Q10. Where can I get naloxone?**

Naloxone is a prescription only medication. This means it needs to be prescribed by your Doctor or provided through a drug treatment service or support programme. Naloxone will be prescribed to a

person who is at risk of overdosing on opioids. If you are prescribed naloxone, ask your Doctor for more than one and give it to a friend or family member.

**Q11. Do I have to pay for naloxone?**

- Some Addiction and Homeless Services can provide you with naloxone without a charge, not all Support Programmes have access to naloxone.
- Prenoxad™ (injectable naloxone) is not reimbursable so if your doctor prescribes it to you there will be a charge when you collect it from the pharmacy.
- Nyxoid™ and Ventizolve™ (nasal spray naloxone) is reimbursable, this means that if you are availing of an opioid substitution treatment the doctor who prescribes your methadone/ buprenorphine can include intranasal naloxone on the prescription form for you to collect from the pharmacy without a charge, see below image.

**OPIOID SUBSTITUTION TREATMENT PRESCRIPTION FORM**

PHARMACY SEQUENCE NO. [SAMPLE] SERIAL NO. [SAMPLE]

PATIENT DETAILS: SURNAME [SAMPLE], FIRST NAME [SAMPLE], ADDRESS [SAMPLE], PATIENT'S AGE IF UNDER 12 YEARS [SAMPLE], TREATMENT CARD NO. PH 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

PRESCRIPTION DETAILS: DATE PRESCRIBED [00/00/00], DRUG NAME, FORM AND STRENGTH [SAMPLE]

OPIOID SUBSTITUTION TREATMENT:
 

- METHADONE
- BUPRENORPHINE
- BUPRENORPHINE/NALOXONE

OPIOID OVERDOSE THERAPY (FOR EMERGENCY USE ONLY):
 

- NALOXONE NASAL SPRAY

**Q12. I am committed to recovery so why do I need to get or carry a naloxone kit?**

As a precautionary measure, it's important to have access to naloxone. You may need to use it if you witness an overdose.

**Q13. Can I use naloxone that has been prescribed for me on someone else?**

What you do with your medication is your responsibility. If you have naloxone and have received training to recognise an opioid overdose, can demonstrate basic life support and know how to administer it then here is what the law says; 'There should be no exclusions from administering naloxone where the risk of opioid overdose is suspected as failure to administer naloxone may result in the death of an individual. Legislation is in place which allows intervention in an emergency situation, Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011, SI 449 and SI 530 for those who have received training.

**Q14. How do I dispose of a used Prenoxad™ Injection?**

If you have used Prenoxad™ Injection, any left-over product, including used and unused needles, should be given to the attending ambulance crew or by handing it into a pharmacy or any needle exchange service.

**Q15. If the person begins breathing on their own after giving them naloxone, why should I still call 112 or 999?**

Naloxone only lasts for a limited time (20-90 minutes) so it's possible that the person could go into respiratory arrest again due to the opioids still in their system. Medical professionals can help provide the necessary treatment to prevent respiratory failure.

**Q16. If naloxone has been administered and the person refuses to go into an Ambulance and decides they want to reuse later, how long should they wait until using again?**

The person has the right to decide whether they wish to go into the ambulance or not. Naloxone only lasts for a limited time so it's important that the person is advised that it's possible that they could go into respiratory arrest again due to the opioids still in their system. The harm reduction advice is to ensure that the person is aware of the risk that they may slip back into overdose and the risks associated with consuming again.

**Q17. Does naloxone have an expiry date?**

There is an expiration date of three years on naloxone, to get a replacement take it back to where you got it and ask for a new one.

**Q18. Can I use naloxone if it has expired?**

Naloxone will start to lose its effectiveness when it's out of date. However, it may be strong enough to reverse an overdose if that is the only kit that is available. In the case of an emergency, it's better to use an expired dose than to not administer anything, so use it, continue to perform chest compressions (if the person is not breathing) and call for help and an ambulance.

**Q19. If someone either uses or loses naloxone will it be replaced?**

Yes, to get a replacement go back to where you got it from and ask for a new one. They may ask if it was lost or used to understand the circumstances if it was administered but you do not have to provide any details if you are uncomfortable doing so.

**Q20. Will I have to pay for the replacement?**

Please see previous question **Q11. Do I have to pay for naloxone?**

**Q21. If the Gardaí are called what will happen?**

Naloxone is not a controlled drug, it is legal to carry both types of naloxone so it will not be confiscated by the Gardaí. If you witness a suspected overdose call 112 or 999 without delay and STAY WITH THEM the wellbeing of the person experiencing the overdose is the first priority for all emergency services, including the Gardaí.

**Q22. Can Naloxone be safely administered to a person who is pregnant?**

Naloxone should not be administered to a person who is pregnant unless the clinical condition of the woman requires treatment with naloxone. If you believe the person experiencing an overdose may be pregnant contact 112 or 999 immediately, advise the operator that the person may be pregnant.

**Q23. Can Naloxone be safely administered to a person who is breast-feeding?**

Naloxone should not be administered to a person who is breast-feeding unless the clinical condition of the woman requires treatment with naloxone. It is not known whether naloxone passes into breast milk and it is not established whether infants who are breast-fed are affected by naloxone. When the ambulance arrives advise the Paramedic that you have administered the naloxone to a person who is breast-feeding so medical guidance can be provided to them.