

Responding to an Overdose During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Naloxone (NARCAN®) is a medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. It only works on opioids, such as heroin, prescription painkillers and fentanyl, but is safe to use even if opioids are not present.

COVID-19 precautions: Responding to an overdose will require a brief period of being less than 6 feet from another person. Do your best to avoid unnecessary contact. If possible, wear disposable gloves to administer naloxone and use a face shield to perform rescue breathing. **After responding, wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and **use an alcohol wipe on anything else you touched** (such as a phone), even if you have gloves on. See steps to take to respond to an opioid overdose during COVID-19.

Shout and Sternal Rub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check for signs and symptoms: Blue lips and fingernails on a lighter-skinned person, white or ashy lips and fingernails on a darker-skinned person; slow, struggled, gurgling or no breathing. • If these signs are present, shout to check for responsiveness. • If no response, rub knuckles (wearing disposable gloves, if available) firmly up and down on the person's sternum (breast bone) for 10 seconds. • If no response, call 9-1-1 for medical backup. Remember, Washington's Good Samaritan Law protects you in some instances from minor drug possession when you respond to an overdose. More information can be found at www.stopoverdose.org.
Give Naloxone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put on disposable gloves (if available) if you haven't already. • Give 1 dose of naloxone (injection or nasal). • If no response in 2-3 minutes, give another dose.
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the person is not breathing, perform rescue breathing (mouth-to-mouth)*. If available, use a face shield. There is still a risk of COVID-19 transmission when using a face shield, but it may reduce the risk. Gently tilt back their head. Pinch their nose, give 2 short breaths. If their chest rises, continue with 1 full breath every 5 seconds. *If you do not feel comfortable doing rescue breathing due to fear of COVID-19, be sure you have called 9-1-1 so that medical backup is on the way. • If there is no response after 2-3 minutes, administer another dose of naloxone and continue rescue breathing. Continue this process every 2-3 minutes until they respond. • Place person in the recovery position (on their side) if you need to leave them for any reason, including if you need to meet emergency personnel or seek other help. • Once the person wakes up, explain what happened and stay with them! They might fall back into an overdose!

Contact the program where you received your kit to get a refill, or visit doh.wa.gov/OverdoseandNaloxone for information on getting naloxone.

For general information on COVID-19, visit doh.wa.gov/Coronavirus or cdc.gov/covid19.

This document was adapted with permission from the NYC Health Department.

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