



Consumers Can Help Prevent Harmful Medication Incidents

## SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

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### Save a Life—Get a Naloxone Kit to Treat an Opioid Overdose

There has been a lot of news about opioid overdoses recently. Opioids, such as oxycodone and morphine, are medications used to treat pain. You can suffer an opioid overdose even when the medication has been prescribed for you. The risk is greater with high doses and for people with certain medical conditions, or when an opioid is taken with alcohol or sleeping pills. Signs of an opioid overdose include weakness and limpness of the body, difficulty waking up, and breathing that has slowed or stopped.

Naloxone is a medication that can temporarily treat an opioid overdose. If given right away, naloxone can help keep the person alive until an ambulance comes. Naloxone kits are available without a prescription. Some provinces and territories provide these kits free of charge. Ask your healthcare provider how and where you can get a naloxone kit to keep at home.



#### SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following suggestions for consumers about opioid overdose and the use of naloxone to reduce harm from overdose:

- If your doctor prescribes an opioid medication, be sure to ask about the risks. For example, ask whether you or a loved one is at high risk of an opioid overdose.
- Ask your healthcare provider how to get a naloxone kit to keep at home if you or a loved one is at risk.
- Ask your healthcare provider how to recognize the signs of an opioid overdose, when to give naloxone, and when to get help.
- If you get a naloxone kit, ask your healthcare provider to review the instructions with you and to show you how to use the kit.



#### Read some additional important tips about preventing harm from opioid medications:

- [Opioid Pain Medicines: Information for Patients and Families](http://www.ismp-canada.org/download/OpioidStewardship/opioid-handout-bw.pdf)  
[www.ismp-canada.org/download/OpioidStewardship/opioid-handout-bw.pdf](http://www.ismp-canada.org/download/OpioidStewardship/opioid-handout-bw.pdf)
- [Informed Consumers Can Help Prevent Harm from Opioid Use!](http://www.safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/newsletter_PreventHarmFromOpioids.html)  
[www.safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/newsletter\\_PreventHarmFromOpioids.html](http://www.safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/newsletter_PreventHarmFromOpioids.html)
- [Opioids - Be an Informed Consumer](http://www.safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/question-opioids.html)  
[www.safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/question-opioids.html](http://www.safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/question-opioids.html)

#### Medication safety bulletins contribute to Global Patient Safety Alerts.

This newsletter was developed in collaboration with Best Medicines Coalition and Patients for Patient Safety Canada.

Recommendations are shared with healthcare providers, through the ISMP Canada Safety Bulletin, so that changes can be made together.

This newsletter shares information about safe medication practices, is noncommercial, and is therefore exempt from Canadian anti-spam legislation.