



GBS HEALTH & WELLNESS

Clinical Corner

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Have you ever passed by a billboard that reads “Heroin. Pills. It All Kills. NALOXONE SAVES. GET IT. UtahNaloxone.org”?

The message is a reminder of the need to bring awareness and education to all family, friends, and caregivers of those who require opioids as part of their healthcare or those who may suffer from opioid use disorder. Let 2023 be the year you dedicate yourself to learning more about saving lives through naloxone.

Opioids include prescription medications, such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, and morphine as well as illegal substances like heroin. Opioids are powerful pain-reducing medications which carry serious risks. The life-threatening risk of respiratory depression (breathing distress) is the trademark of an opioid overdose. Naloxone is an opioid antagonist, which means it attaches to the opioid receptors found in the body, blocking the effects of the opioid, and quickly restoring breathing.

Naloxone could be viewed as an emergency tool, just like a fire extinguisher, a life jacket or an EpiPen. Improving safety and preparedness reduces stress and anxiety in the event of an emergency. Anyone may obtain naloxone from their local pharmacy and even the local library for free!

Learn more about how to use naloxone by registering for a naloxone training course [here](#). Consider having open conversations with others to work through hesitations and anxiety surrounding this topic. Be intentional about preparing yourself to save a life. Continue reading for information about risk factors and signs of opioid overdose.

Conditions that increase the risk of opioid overdose include the following:

- › 65 years and older
- › Concurrent use of Benzodiazepines, such as lorazepam, clonazepam for anxiety
- › Use of street opioids like heroin
- › Alcohol use disorder
- › Sleep apnea, even mild

A person taking opioids, even as prescribed, may not necessarily be dependent on the medication to accidentally overdose. Whatever the circumstances, knowing the signs of a suspected opioid overdose and having naloxone on hand are key in saving a life.

Signs of a suspected overdose include:

- › Small, constricted “pinpoint” pupils
- › Falling asleep
- › Loss of consciousness
- › Slow, shallow breathing
- › Choking, gurgling sounds
- › Body goes limp, fingernails or lips turning blue

Resources

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
[The Salt Lake Tribune](#)