

# Guidelines for **Social Workers** in the Administration of **NALOXONE**



# Administering **NALOXONE**

The Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers is aware of the current opioid crisis occurring throughout Canada. Saskatchewan has also been impacted by this overdose epidemic. There is increased access to fentanyl, morphine, codeine, etc. in Saskatchewan communities, which is identified by our government as a public health and safety concern. No one is immune from experiencing an overdose.

The SASW is committed to responding to the opioid epidemic for our community. Our SASW membership may be directly seeing this impact in the cities or rural areas where we practice.

Due to the increased rate of overdose occurring, this document is to provide the SASW membership with support and guidance for their members when working with this emerging trend. SASW acknowledges that the profession of social work has a responsibility to respond to a client experiencing a crisis, such as an overdose.

The Government of Canada states "Naloxone (Narcan) is an opioid antagonist that temporarily prevents or reverses the effects of opioids. This is an agent that is safe for all ages and only affects the body if there are opioids in the system and causes no ill effect otherwise. There is no harm by Naloxone if used improperly."

The **Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act** protects one who has taken drugs or has some in possession from simple drug possession charges. This law applies to the person who seeks help and anyone else at the scene when help arrives. For more information, please refer to <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/opioids/about-good-samaritan-drug-overdose-act.html>.

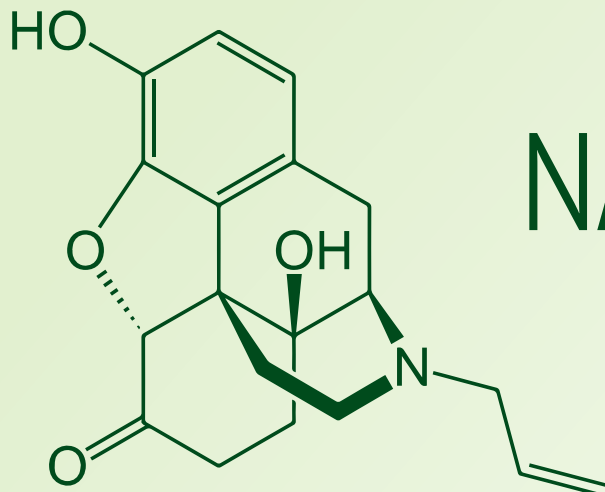
SASW is in support of their membership receiving training in the use of Naloxone in emergent situations. With training, Social Workers may administer Naloxone to someone experiencing an actual or reasonably perceived drug overdose where there is no qualified medical professional able to manage the situation.

**Training in the administration of Naloxone may be available through one of the following sources:**

- Saskatchewan Health Authority
- Online course: <https://towardtheheart.com/naloxone-lesson/>



**It's important to note that NALOXONE treatment itself does not replace the need to seek immediate medical attention. Call 911 immediately if you suspect an overdose.**



# NALOXONE

## Save a Life

### What is NALOXONE?

Naloxone (pronounced na-LOX-own) is a fast-acting drug used to temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. Naloxone can restore breathing within 2 to 5 minutes.

### Why does NALOXONE work only temporarily?

Naloxone is active in the body for only 20 to 90 minutes, but the effects of most opioids can last longer. This means that the effects of naloxone are likely to wear off before the opioids are gone from the body, which could cause breathing to stop again. Naloxone may need to be used again, depending on the amount, type or method of consumption of the opioids (e.g., oral, injection).

An overdose is always an emergency. Even if naloxone has been administered, always call for help.

### Is NALOXONE safe for everyone?

Yes, naloxone is safe for all ages. It works only if you have opioids in your system. It is safe to keep on-hand because it cannot be improperly used and does not create dependence.

### How is NALOXONE helping to address Canada's opioid crisis?

Naloxone has been used to successfully reverse thousands of opioid overdoses across Canada. It is used by first-responders such as paramedics and firefighters. Take-home naloxone kits are also available to anyone who may be at risk of an overdose or who is likely to encounter one. Take-home naloxone kits are available without a prescription and can be picked up at most pharmacies or local health authorities.



If you or someone you know is using opioids, make sure to carry NALOXONE with you. It's available without a prescription and can be picked up at most pharmacies or local health authorities.

## In Canada, two types of take-home NALOXONE kits are available:

**Naloxone Nasal Spray is sprayed** directly into the nose where it is absorbed. It starts to take effect in 2 to 3 minutes.  
**Injectable Naloxone is injected** into a muscle in your body: the upper arm, thigh or buttocks are best. It starts to take effect in 3 to 5 minutes.

## Naloxone Saves Lives. Get a Kit.

Naloxone temporarily reverses the effects of an opioid overdose to help restore breathing. If you think someone is experiencing an opioid overdose, call 9-1-1 or your local emergency help line, then give naloxone by following the directions on the kit. Take-home kits are available at most pharmacies or local health authorities; no prescription is needed.



**Kits expire and should be replaced after 18 to 24 months**



# Suspect an overdose? **CALL. STAY. HELP.**

## Opioids

Like fentanyl, morphine, oxycodone, and hydromorphone – are medications that can help relieve pain. However, opioids are also available illegally. **Illegal opioids are any opioids that are made, shared or sold illegally.**

### How can opioids cause an overdose?

Opioids affect how your brain controls your breathing. If you take more opioids than your body can handle, you will start to show signs and symptoms of an overdose, such as:



**SLOW, WEAK OR  
NO BREATHING**



**BLUE LIPS  
OR NAILS**



**DIZZINESS  
AND CONFUSION**



**CAN'T BE  
WOKEN UP**



**CHOKING, GURGLING  
OR SNORING SOUNDS**



**DROWSINESS OR  
DIFFICULTY STAYING  
AWAKE**

# DRUGS

## Get the facts, know the risks

[Canada.ca/Opioids](https://Canada.ca/Opioids)

### Protect yourself from an overdose

#### If you use illegal opioids:

- don't mix them with alcohol, or other drugs
- don't use alone – stick with a friend
- know the signs of an opioid overdose
- carry a naloxone kit

### If you witness an overdose, stay and help

Witnessing an overdose can be scary, as a person's breathing becomes weaker, shallower, or even stops completely. Overdoses are a medical emergency. Staying at the scene to help can save someone's life. If you've taken drugs, or have some on you, you are protected from simple drug possession charges by the **Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act**. This law applies to the person who seeks help and anyone else at the scene when help arrives.

### Overdoses can happen if you take:

- an opioid not prescribed for you
- more opioids than prescribed for you, such as a higher dose
- an opioid with alcohol or other drugs (e.g., anxiety medication, muscle relaxants, or sleeping pills)
- an opioid that has been tampered with (e.g., broken or crushed)
- illegally produced or obtained opioids

If you have stopped taking opioids for a while and start taking them again, you can be at risk of an overdose because your body is not used to the drug anymore.

### If you suspect an opioid overdose, you should:



Call 9-1-1 (or your local emergency help line) and stay at the scene



Give NALOXONE, if you have it



Know that the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act* protects you from simple drug possession charges