



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

About Naloxone (Narcan®)

This information explains what naloxone (Narcan®) is and when to use it. If you're taking opioids, it's important that the people you live with know when and how to use naloxone and where to find it in your home.

What is Naloxone?

Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose if you take more opioids than your healthcare provider prescribes you and you become unresponsive or unconscious. Opioids (also called narcotics) are strong painkillers prescribed to help with moderate to severe pain. Some examples include oxycodone (Percocet, Oxycontin®), morphine (MS Contin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), and fentanyl (Duragesic®). For more information about opioids, read *Opioids: What You Need to Know* (www.mskcc.org/pe/opioids).

If you're prescribed opioids for chronic pain or prescribed opioids with a sedative (medication to make you sleepy), we may also prescribe you naloxone. While we don't expect that you'll need to use it if you follow your healthcare provider's instructions for taking opioids, we want to make sure you're safe in case of an

emergency.

When Should I Use Naloxone?

Naloxone should be used in case of an emergency when you or someone taking opioids takes more than what's prescribed and shows signs of an overdose. It's important to know the signs of an overdose so you know when to use naloxone. If you're taking opioids, the people you live with need to know when and how to use naloxone and where to find it in case you need it. Please ask everyone to read the instructions that come with your prescription.

Signs of an opioid overdose include:

- Slow or stopped breathing
- Unresponsive even when shaking the person or calling their name
- Blue, gray, or white lips and fingernails
- Tiny pupils
- Snoring or gurgling sounds

If you're unsure if you should use naloxone, call 911, and follow the operator's instructions. Always call 911 after using naloxone as its effects only last 30 to 90 minutes, and you may need more medical care.

How Do I Use Naloxone?

Naloxone comes as a nasal spray or an injection (shot). It will come with instructions on how to use it. Follow the instructions that come with it and call 911.

Does My Insurance Cover Naloxone?

Check with your insurance provider to find out if naloxone is covered or what your co-pay is.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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