



# Get Naloxone. Save a Life.

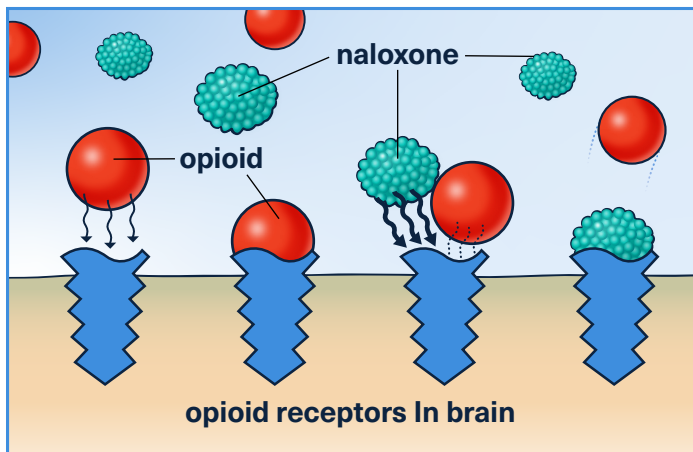
Last updated: Mar 15, 2022

## What is naloxone?

Naloxone is a safe medication that can be used to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. If someone has taken too much of an opioid – like oxycodone, heroin, or fentanyl – they may stop breathing and become unconscious. Naloxone can restore breathing within 2 to 5 minutes and bring them back to life.

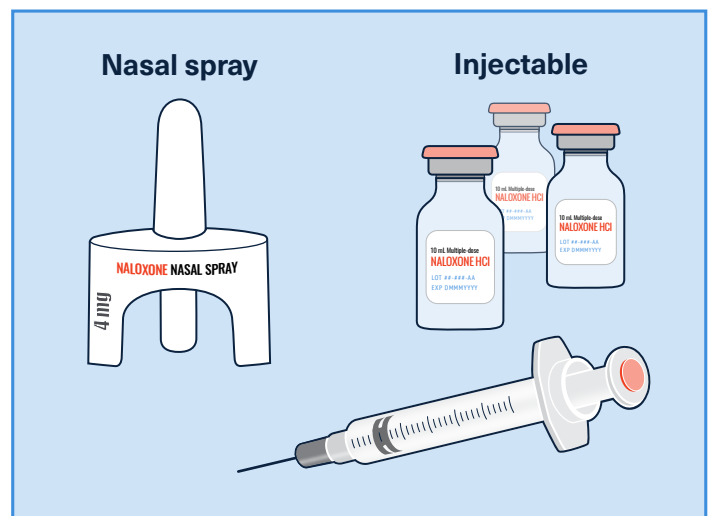
## How does naloxone work?

Naloxone replaces opioids on the brain receptors that are telling the body to stop breathing. Naloxone will stay active in the body for up to 90 minutes, but opioids can stay active for longer, which could cause the person to stop breathing again. Once an overdose has been reversed with naloxone, it is important to make sure the person receives follow-up care, either from a loved one or emergency medical services if necessary. Naloxone does not reverse the effects of any other substances in the system, like alcohol, stimulants, or other pharmaceuticals like benzodiazepines (Xanax).



## What does naloxone look like?

Naloxone comes in two forms: nasal spray and injectable. The naloxone nasal spray is familiarly known by the brand name NARCAN®, and is sprayed directly into the nose where it is absorbed and can take effect in 2 to 3 minutes. Injectable naloxone is injected directly into muscle (the upper arm or thigh), and can take effect in 2 to 3 minutes. If the first dose of naloxone doesn't start the person breathing again within 2 minutes, it is safe to give a second dose.



## Is naloxone safe to use?

Yes. Naloxone will not cause any harmful effects if someone is not using opioids. Naloxone may cause someone to experience symptoms of opioid withdrawal, which can look like irritation or sickness. Keep reading to learn how to respond to an overdose, including what to do if someone seems sick or like they are in withdrawal.

## WHERE CAN I GET NALOXONE?

Naloxone is available in the state of Illinois to any person who is prescribed and/or uses opioids, or has a loved one who is prescribed and/or uses opioids. Illinois state law allows for nonmedical personnel to administer naloxone without liability. The Illinois Statewide Naloxone Standing Order also makes it possible to request naloxone at a pharmacy without a prescription. Most insurances will cover the cost of naloxone, including the more expensive nasal spray NARCAN version. Naloxone is also available through Drug Overdose Prevention Programs (DOPPs) throughout Illinois.

To request naloxone through CCDPH's distribution to non-profits and first responders, please visit <https://cookcountypublichealth.org/naloxone-training-video>

To find your closest DOPP, visit or call the Illinois Helpline for Opioids & Other Substances:

[www.helplineil.org](http://www.helplineil.org)

Call 833-234-6343 (HELP)

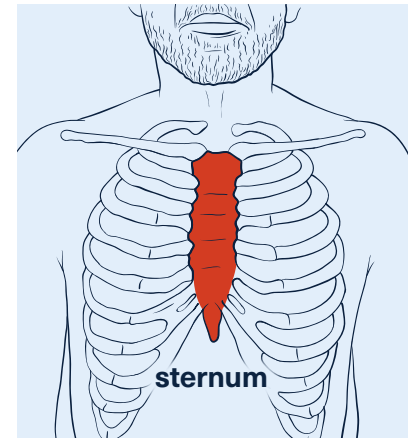
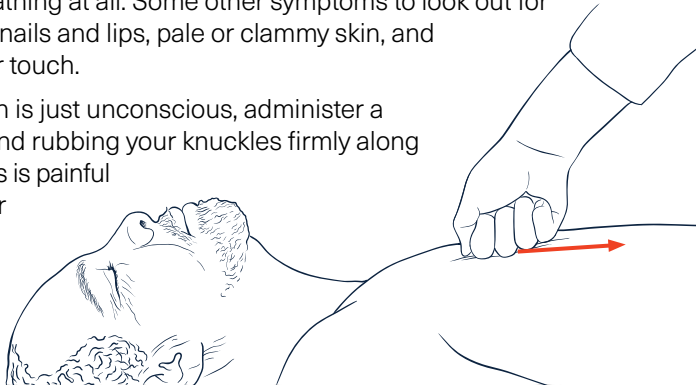
Text "HELP" to 833234.

# Responding to an Overdose with Naloxone

## STEP 1 Recognize an Opioid Overdose

Someone who is experiencing an opioid overdose will have slow or irregular (gurgling) breathing, or may not be breathing at all. Some other symptoms to look out for include: blue or purple fingernails and lips, pale or clammy skin, and unresponsiveness to voice or touch.

If you are unsure if the person is just unconscious, administer a sternal rub by making a fist and rubbing your knuckles firmly along the person's sternal bone. This is painful enough to wake a sleeping or unconscious person, but will not be able to reverse an opioid overdose.

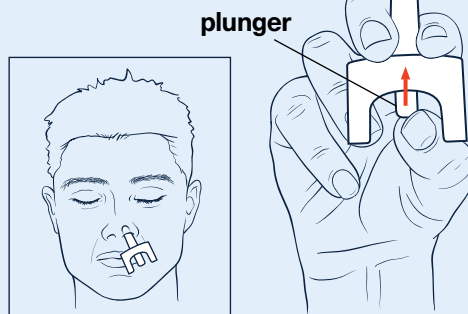


## STEP 2 Administer naloxone

**The first and most important thing to do is administer naloxone.**

**You can also call for Emergency Medical Services at the same time, so that they are on the way while you are giving the person naloxone.**

### Nasal naloxone:

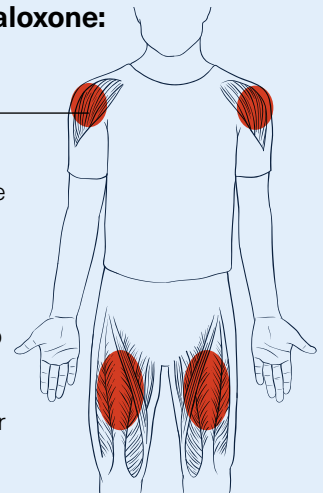


Peel off the tab and insert the tip into one nostril. Push firmly to administer the full dose into the nostril. You do not need to spray in both nostrils.

### Injectable naloxone:

#### injection sites

Open the needle and pop the top off the vial of injectable naloxone. Draw the entire vial up into the needle, and inject into the upper arm or thigh muscle.



**Start a timer or count to 2 minutes** while administering rescue breathing if you are able (Step 4). If the person is not responding or breathing on their own after 2 minutes, you can give them another dose of injectable or nasal naloxone. Naloxone takes about 2 to 3 minutes to take effect, and more than one dose may be necessary if the person has ingested fentanyl.

## STEP 3 (OPTIONAL) Call 9-1-1

Enough naloxone should reverse an overdose and get someone breathing again, but it will not be able to address other medical problems they may be experiencing, such as pneumonia or heart problems. If you feel safe calling 9-1-1 for emergency medical services, you are protected in Illinois by the Good Samaritan law, which prevents you and the person whose overdose you are reversing from being charged or prosecuted for felony possession of different substances.

### When you call 9-1-1:

- let the operator know that you are with someone who is unresponsive and not breathing
- give your exact location
- tell them if you used naloxone already and it did not work

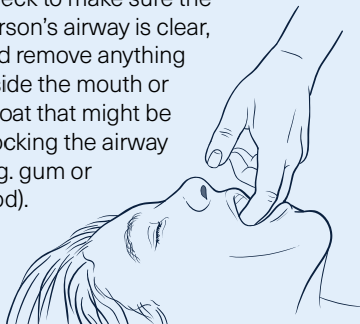
You do **not** need to tell the operator that you think the person used illegal drugs, especially if you think this will put them in danger.

## STEP 4 (OPTIONAL with COVID-19 precautions\*) Rescue Breathing

While you are waiting for the naloxone to take effect, administer Rescue Breathing to support respiration. If you are CPR trained, you can also begin CPR at this time.

- You can use a face shield while performing rescue breathing, although this will not prevent the transmission of respiratory viruses like COVID-19.
- Continue giving breaths every 5 seconds, before administering another dose of naloxone if necessary.
- Once the person is breathing on their own again, you can move them into the Recovery Position (Step 5).
- If the person is still not breathing and/or has no pulse after receiving naloxone and rescue breathing, they need emergency medical care. Call 9-1-1 immediately if you have not done so already.

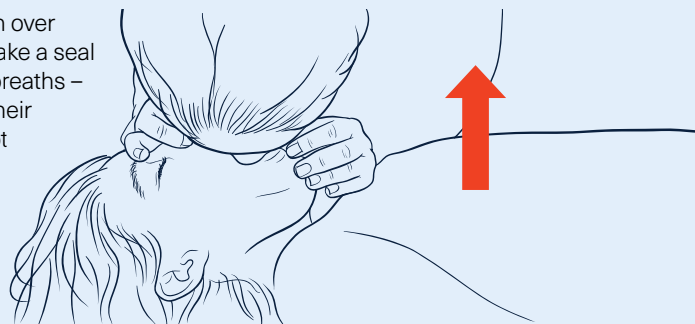
**1** Check to make sure the person's airway is clear, and remove anything inside the mouth or throat that might be blocking the airway (e.g. gum or food).



**2** While the person is on their back, place one hand on their chin, tilt the head back, and pinch the nose closed.



**3** Place your mouth over their mouth to make a seal and give 2 slow breaths – you should see their chest rise, but not the stomach.



\*COVID-19 precautions include only performing rescue breathing for someone you live and/or interact with unmasked daily, and using breath assist devices such as shields or bag valve masks when rescue breathing

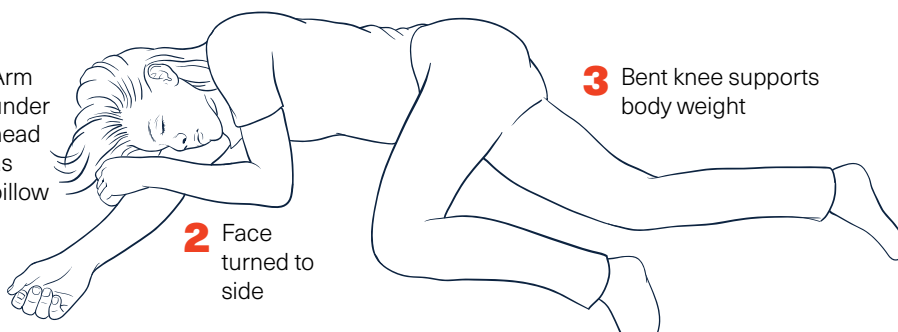
## STEP 5 Recovery Position

Once the person is breathing on their own again, put the person in the Recovery Position so that their airway is clear and they won't choke on their own vomit if they get sick. Roll the person on to one of their sides, place one arm under the head to pillow the head and keep the face turned to the side, and support the body weight with a bent knee so the legs are in the shape of the number 4.

**1** Arm under head as pillow

**2** Face turned to side

**3** Bent knee supports body weight



## STEP 6 Aftercare

Waking up from an overdose can be traumatizing, and the person may seem scared or confused, especially if you are not someone they know. As they start to wake up, give them a little bit of space and gently welcome them back into consciousness. You can try to engage them by saying **“Hi, my name is [YOUR NAME], and I just had to give you Narcan. I’m sorry you’re not feeling great. Sit up when you’re ready. You’re safe, and I’m glad you’re alive.”**

Once the person is breathing and conscious again, the naloxone will continue to work for 30-90 minutes. After the naloxone wears off the person could experience an overdose again. If a loved one or trusted companion is able to stay with them, this can help to make sure an overdose doesn't happen again, or if it does, someone is able to re-administer naloxone. If the person is experiencing other medical complications, they should seek medical care and attention.

[cookcountypublichealth.org/opioids](https://cookcountypublichealth.org/opioids)

Please visit our website for additional information and/or updates to our naloxone and overdose response guidance.



**Cook County** DEPT. of  
**Public Health**  
Promoting health. Preventing disease. Protecting you.