

Kroger to offer anti-overdose drug without prescription

February 12 2016, by Dan Sewell



Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine is interviewed as customers visit the pharmacy during a news conference at the Oakley Kroger Marketplace store to announce the supermarket chain's decision to offer the opioid overdose reversal medicine Naloxone without a prescription, Friday, Feb. 12, 2016, in Cincinnati. Naloxone is routinely carried by fire-rescue crews, which use it thousands of times a year in Ohio to revive overdose victims. Kroger, based in Cincinnati, has 2,774 supermarkets and multi-department stores in 35 states and the District of Columbia. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

Ohio-based grocery chain Kroger Co. said Friday it will make the overdose-reversal drug naloxone available without a prescription in its pharmacies across Ohio and northern Kentucky, a region hard-hit by deadly heroin.

Kroger said more than 200 of its pharmacies will offer naloxone over the counter within days.

"We want families dealing with addiction to know that they can count on having the drug available in the event that they need it," Jeff Talbot, Kroger vice president of merchandising, said in a statement.

Ohio fire crews and other first responders use naloxone thousands of times a year to revive opioid overdose victims. Ohio overdose deaths jumped 18 percent in 2014, one of the nation's sharpest increases. Those on the front lines of the battle against heroin's spread have increasingly supported allowing and educating families and friends of addicts to administer naloxone in emergencies.

State regulators in Ohio and Kentucky have allowed the drug to be sold over the counter.

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and U.S. Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, joined Kroger officials at a Cincinnati grocery store for the retailer's announcement. Portman has been pushing a multi-pronged heroin bill in the Senate that includes expanded availability of naloxone.



A Naloxone nasal injector is demonstrated during a news conference at the Oakley Kroger Marketplace store to announce the supermarket chain's decision to offer the opioid overdose reversal medicine without a prescription, Friday, Feb. 12, 2016, in Cincinnati. Naloxone is routinely carried by fire-rescue crews, which use it thousands of times a year in Ohio to revive overdose victims. Kroger, based in Cincinnati, has 2,774 supermarkets and multi-department stores in 35 states and the District of Columbia. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

"This marks an important step in our fight to combat addiction and we all need to continue to work for a bottom-up, comprehensive approach to the heroin epidemic," Portman, from the Cincinnati area, said in a statement.

CVS said recently it will soon offer naloxone without a prescription at its Ohio pharmacies.

Cincinnati-based Kroger is the nation's largest traditional grocer and has

2,774 supermarkets and multi-department stores in 35 states and the District of Columbia. They include stores operating under some two dozen local banners in other states such as Fry's, Ralphs and Harris Teeter.



Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine handles a Naloxone nasal injector during a news conference at the Oakley Kroger Marketplace store to announce the supermarket chain's decision to offer the opioid overdose reversal medicine without a prescription, Friday, Feb. 12, 2016, in Cincinnati. Naloxone is routinely carried by fire-rescue crews, which use it thousands of times a year in Ohio to revive overdose victims. Kroger, based in Cincinnati, has 2,774 supermarkets and multi-department stores in 35 states and the District of Columbia. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

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