

Medication treatment may lower risk for opioid overdose death

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(HealthDay)—Medication treatment with methadone and buprenorphine

is associated with a significantly lower risk for overdose death for people with opioid use disorder (OUD) compared with nonmedication treatment, but this lower risk does not persist after discontinuing treatment, according to a study published online Feb. 25 in *Addiction*.

Noa Krawczyk, Ph.D., from the New York University School of Medicine in New York City, and colleagues compared overdose mortality among those in medication versus nonmedication treatments in specialty care settings. The analysis included statewide treatment data linked to death records for 48,274 adults admitted to publicly funded outpatient specialty treatment programs in Maryland (2015 through 2016) for primary diagnosis of OUD.

The researchers found that during the study period, there were 371 opioid overdose deaths. Periods in medication treatment were associated with a [lower risk](#) for opioid [overdose death](#) versus periods in nonmedication treatment (adjusted hazard ratio [aHR], 0.18). However, the risk for overdose death was similar in the periods after discharge from either nonmedication treatment (aHR, 5.45) or [medication treatment](#) (aHR, 5.85).

"Policy makers should ensure substance use treatment systems make opioid agonist medications highly accessible to all patients who present with OUD and focus efforts on promoting engagement and retention in these programs," the authors write.

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