

# Video: Three things to know when using Narcan during an opioid overdose

March 30 2023, by Marty Velasco Hames

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Credit: Mayo Clinic News Network

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Narcan, 4 milligram (mg) nasal spray for over-the-counter sale. Narcan is a nasal spray version of naloxone, a rescue medicine that can be administered in the event of an opioid drug overdose. The FDA approval will pave the way for the medication to be sold in grocery stores, convenience stores, vending machines and other retail locations without a prescription.

Opioids are one of the most commonly prescribed medications to treat

acute pain. Opioids are a class of drugs, including medications such as fentanyl, morphine and oxycodone. These medications work by blocking pain receptors in the central nervous system.

What makes opioids effective, is also what makes them dangerous due to risks associated with addiction and overdoses. Opioid misuse is skyrocketing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, opioids are now the main driver of drug overdose deaths in the U.S.

Dr. Holly Geyer, a Mayo Clinic addiction medicine specialist, points out three important things to know when using naloxone that can help save someone's life.

### **When to use**

If you suspect someone is having an opioid overdose, Dr. Geyer recommends administering Narcan immediately. She says proceed even if the person is unconscious.

### **How to use**

"You're going to put that person on their side in the recovery position, making sure that your surroundings are safe, and then administer it by just putting it (the nozzle) inside the nostril and giving it a squeeze," explains Dr. Geyer.

### **How it works**

Narcan works by temporarily blocking the effects of an opioid. "Naloxone goes through the bloodstream, straight to that part of the brain," says Dr. Geyer. "It knocks off the opioid from that receptor,

binds to it and prevents the opioid from having an effect."

## **Call 911 immediately**

Dr. Geyer says it is critical to remember that Narcan's effects are only temporary and may last only minutes. "It is always a [medical emergency](#) if Naloxone is given. Call 911 right away," says Dr. Geyer.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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