

Opioid OD rescue drug Narcan will reach drug store shelves next week

August 30 2023, by Cara Murez



Narcan, a lifesaving medication that reverses opioid overdose, will be

available on U.S. drugstore shelves and online starting next week.

People who want to carry Narcan, the [nasal spray](#) version of naloxone, will be able to find it at Walgreens, Rite Aid, Walmart and CVS for a suggested retail price of \$44.99 for a box of two doses, the drug maker reported Wednesday.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Emergent BioSolutions' overdose antidote in March in response to record numbers of overdose deaths, largely due to powerful synthetic drugs like fentanyl.

"We think really everyone should be thinking about putting this into their first aid kit," Walgreens chief medical officer Dr. Kevin Ban told *CNN*. "It's really unlimited in terms of the folks who should make sure that they get some naloxone in the off chance that they come across someone who was experiencing an overdose. This is a way to reverse that overdose. It'll save people's lives."

Most U.S. states already had standing orders to allow pharmacies and other qualified organizations to provide this antidote without a prescription for those at risk, but this provides even more availability. The drug can revive a person who is overdosing within minutes.

"It is excellent news that there's an over-the-counter naloxone product," said Maya Doe-Simkins, co-director of Remedy Alliance/For the People, which aims to increase access to affordable naloxone.

Yet Doe-Simkins noted that most people get naloxone from organizations and governments who buy it in bulk, *CNN* reported.

"This is the evidence-based model that is proven to save lives," she said.

Community groups, [first responders](#), state and [local governments](#) and

harm reduction groups will be able to purchase Narcan for a cheaper price than the [general public](#), \$41 per two-dose carton starting Thursday, the manufacturer said.

Narcan could soon be joined by another naloxone nasal spray, called RiVive. The nonprofit Harm Reduction Therapeutics will sell it at cost—\$36 for a two-pack—starting in early 2024, *CNN* reported.

There may still be some barriers to accessing Narcan. CVS plans to offer it for sale behind its pharmacy counter, as well as at the register and for order via pickup and delivery. Walmart and Rite Aid plan to sell it on pain care aisles. Walgreens will stock shelves with cards that someone can bring to a register to access the actual medication, *CNN* said.

"That allows there to be sort of easy requests without having to ask for it," Ban said. "That's one of the things we wanted to remove. We realized that a lot of people just don't want to ask for the medication. So we came up with that mechanism to grab this card, then you can either bring it to the front of the store or the back of the store."

Any barriers may still deter people from accessing the medication, Doe-Simkins said.

"Anything that's layered on to naloxone access is a barrier," she said, noting its over-the-counter availability is something the community has waited for.

"We've been advocating for that for well over a decade," Doe-Simkins noted. "It's about time."

Injectable [naloxone](#) is still available by prescription at a much lower cost.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [opioid overdose epidemic](#).

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