

Biden administration urges schools to carry naloxone, the opioid overdose treatment

October 31 2023, by Cara Murez



The Biden administration is encouraging schools throughout the United States to carry naloxone to help prevent fatal drug overdoses in students.

The medication (Narcan) was [approved](#) earlier this year as an over-the-counter (OTC) nasal spray.

Faculty and students should be prepared to use it to help others, [Dr. Rahul Gupta](#), director of the White House Office of Drug Control Policy, and [Miguel Cardona](#), secretary of education, said in a [joint letter](#) to educators.

"We want to share resources that could help your school and community prevent drug use before it begins and keep students alive long enough to get the help they need in the event of an overdose or poisoning," Gupta and Cardona wrote.

The maker of OTC Narcan, Emergent BioSolutions, plans to lower the price of a two-dose carton of naloxone to \$41 for [community groups](#), first responders, harm reduction groups, and state and [local governments](#), according to *CNN*.

"We will encourage businesses, restaurants, banks, [construction sites](#), schools, others to think about this—think about it as a [smoke alarm](#) or a defibrillator, to make it as easily accessible, because it's not just you," Gupta said when the drug was approved. "It could be your neighbor, it could be your family, your friend, a person at work or school who might need it."

More than 5,000 children and teens have died of drug overdoses involving fentanyl in the past two decades, according to data published recently in [JAMA Pediatrics](#).

More than half of those deaths occurred during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

About 1,500 children and teens died from fentanyl in 2021. That was 30

times higher than in 2013, when [opioid deaths](#) in the United States began to rise, *CNN* reported.

Most pediatric deaths from fentanyl are in 15- to 19-year-olds.

"A teenager today can log onto [social media](#) with a smartphone and buy what they think is an opioid pain medicine or a prescription stimulant to help them study—and instead die from one pill that actually has fentanyl in it," Gupta and Cardona emphasized in their letter.

Naloxone restores breathing as it blocks the effects of opioids on the brain. It's most effective as soon as the signs of an overdose begin. It only works for opioids, but isn't harmful if someone hasn't taken these drugs.

More than 112,000 people died from an overdose in the United States in the 12 months that ended in May, according to estimates from the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics. Most of those deaths were related to fentanyl.

"We at CDC are committed to building drug-free communities and working in communities with the coalitions to keep our country's children safe from dangerous substances," [Dr. Debra Houry](#), the CDC's chief medical officer, said in a statement. "While we have made progress as a nation, there is more work to be done to reduce overdoses and prevent youth substance use."

The White House played host Monday to the [Youth Substance Use Prevention Summit](#), to raise awareness about the dangers of illicit drugs and reduce mental health stigma.

"Schools are integral to the success of local Drug Free Communities, along with parents, civic organizations, [law enforcement](#), media, and

other coalition partners," Cardona said in a statement.

"The U.S. Department of Education is committed to helping schools build positive [school](#) cultures, embrace evidence-based drug prevention strategies, and equip staff with the tools and the training to intervene in the event of [drug](#)-induced health emergencies," he added.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has [more](#) on understanding drug overdoses and deaths.

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