

Naloxone For All!

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Naloxone (Narcan) for All!

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Great news for anyone who has a family member, friend, or loved one who has been prescribed opioids for a variety of medical issues or who may have a substance use disorder. After thorough review, on March 29th, 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Narcan, a naloxone hydrochloride nasal spray for over-the-counter (OTC), nonprescription use (<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-over-counter-naloxone-nasal-spray>). Naloxone is a medication that rapidly reverses the effects of an opioid overdose from prescription or illicit substance use and has been shown to save lives. It is the standard treatment for opioid overdose.

Narcan by Emergent BioSolutions, is the first naloxone product approved for use without a prescription. In the public health fight against the overdose crisis, having OTC Narcan will help reduce deaths from opioid overdose and provide increased opportunities for education, harm reduction, and stigma reduction for people who misuse drugs. With Narcan formulated as a nasal spray, the use of the medication is as simple as placing the nozzle in the nose and pushing a plunger (<https://www.narcan.com/home>). While simple to use, we encourage a review of the Narcan training website or contacting your local Extension Office for additional training information. Having Narcan available OTC will allow this life-saving medication to be sold directly to consumers in retail stores, gas stations, and online. The expanding availability will reduce a major barrier to the access of this lifesaving medication.

With the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>) reporting that drug overdoses from

November 2021-22 caused more than 108,712 fatalities in the U.S ,including 613 deaths in Utah, this is very welcome and exciting news. Many are at risk as a result of abusing synthetic opioids, especially fentanyl. Fentanyl is approximately fifty times more potent than heroin and is often an unexpected illicit additive to many street drugs. Commonly heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, and pills that are made to resemble other prescription opioids contain fentanyl—an extremely deadly combination. With the recent approval of Narcan OTC, there is a new opportunity to save lives.

The exact dates of availability and pricing have not been determined by Emergent BioSolutions as of the writing of this article. The company has indicated that it is committed to providing Narcan at an affordable price and to making it available as soon as possible. Spread the news, Narcan is coming!

Please contact Tim Keady tim.keady@usu.edu, a member of the USU Extension HEART Initiative for more information.