



# Naloxone

## What is naloxone?

Naloxone is a medication that reverses the effects of opioid overdose and helps a person resume normal breathing. Three forms of naloxone products are available: nasal spray, injection, and auto-injection. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's (SAMHSA) Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit can help you learn about the different forms and how to use them.

## Why is naloxone important?

According to the CDC, more than 220 Americans die daily from opioid-related overdoses. Overdose deaths in Georgia are driven mainly by fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. In Georgia, from 2019 to 2021, drug overdose deaths increased by 61%, and fentanyl-involved overdose deaths increased by 230%. Naloxone is an effective tool to help reduce the likelihood of opioid-related deaths.

In Georgia, you can purchase naloxone from your pharmacy without a prescription from your doctor. Not all pharmacies carry naloxone, so call ahead to find out if your pharmacy stocks naloxone. Local health departments and community-based organizations may be able to assist you in getting naloxone at little to no cost.

## What are signs that someone is experiencing an overdose?

Common signs of opioid overdose include:

- Unresponsive, unable to wake up
- Awake, but unable to speak
- Limp body
- Face is pale or clammy
- Blue fingernails and lips
- Pinpoint pupils
- Blue, purple, or gray skin tone
- Slow, shallow, erratic, or no breathing
- Slow, irregular, or no pulse
- Choking sounds or snore-like gurgling (sometimes called "death rattle")

## How do I use naloxone?

Naloxone will not cause harm. However, if someone is showing signs of an opioid overdose, follow these steps:

1. Try to wake them by speaking loudly, pinching, or rubbing your knuckles up and down the sternum (the bony part in the middle of the chest).
2. If you have naloxone, use it. Administer one dose every two minutes.
  - a. Injectable: Draw up the entire vial and inject it into the thigh muscle
  - b. Nasal: Stick the device up one nostril and click the plunger; make sure the device is inserted fully (medication will absorb through the sinuses)
3. Call 911 and alert them that the person is showing signs of an opioid overdose.

4. Provide rescue breathing.
  - a. Get the person on their back
  - b. Tip their head back to straighten the airway
  - c. Pinch their nose
  - d. Put your mouth over theirs, and form a seal
  - e. Provide one breath every five seconds
5. When the person starts to breathe regularly, roll them on their side.

### **Does naloxone cause side effects?**

The use of naloxone can sometimes cause symptoms of opioid withdrawal but are not usually life-threatening. Common opioid withdrawal symptoms may include:

- Feeling nervous, restless, or irritable
- Body aches
- Dizziness or weakness
- Diarrhea, stomach pain, or nausea
- Fever, chills, or goosebumps
- Sneezing or runny nose in the absence of a cold

### **Georgia's 9-1-1 Medical Amnesty Law – Don't Run, Call 9-1-1!**

Georgia's Medical Amnesty Law protects victims and callers seeking medical assistance during drug or alcohol overdose situations.

### **Helpful resources**

- CARES Warm Line: 1-844-326-5400 (Call or Text)
- Georgia Crisis & Access Line: 1-800-715-4225
- Georgia Opioid and Substance Misuse Response Program  
[dph.georgia.gov/stopopioidaddiction](https://dph.georgia.gov/stopopioidaddiction)