

Maximising Opioid Safety

Keeping naloxone in your home could save a life

# Why are we talking about opioid safety?

Opioid pain medicines are prescribed to help with pain, but it’s important to know about their risks

In Australia, 75 people are hospitalised and 2 people die every day from prescribed opioids, but these are mostly preventable

You can take simple steps to reduce your risks

Common prescribed opioids include:

Codeine, Oxycodone, Morphine, Tapentadol, Fentanyl, Buprenorphine.

# Why should I have naloxone at home?

* Naloxone reverses the effects of opioids if you or someone else has a severe reaction.
* It’s safe - even if accidentally given to someone who has not taken opioids.
* In case of an emergency, you or someone else (e.g. a family member or carer) can administer naloxone while waiting for an ambulance – this could save a life.
* Keep naloxone in your home as a part of your opioid safety plan.
* Naloxone is available as a nasal spray and injection.
* Naloxone is available at your pharmacy. Ask your pharmacist today.

# What are the most severe opioid-related risks?

Severe reactions (loss of consciousness, slowed breathing) can be fatal.

This is sometimes called ‘overdose’ even when it happens from taking your prescribed dose.

Severe reactions are quite common, and can sometimes happen even when you follow the directions - that’s why it’s important to be prepared.

# What increases opioid-related risk?

* Taking extra medicine (e.g. for worse pain)
* A mix-up with your medicines (e.g. accidently doubling up)
* Combining with alcohol or other medicines (e.g. sleeping pills or other pain medicines)
* Other changes in your health (e.g. with your liver, kidneys, or lungs)
* Someone else taking your opioid pain medicine.

# Reduce your risk

* Do not mix opioids with alcohol or other sedative medicines
* Always stick to your prescribed dose
* Use strategies to remember when you have taken your medicines (e.g. webster packs, marking off on a calendar)
* Stick to the same doctor and pharmacist for your treatment
* Ask your pharmacist or doctor about other ways of managing pain.

# Opioid Safety Plan

Share this plan with your family, friends or carer

* Make a plan
* Keep naloxone in an accessible place at home.
* Ensure that others in your home know what naloxone is used for, where it is kept, and how to use it
* Familiarise yourself and others with the symptoms to look out for

**My naloxone is kept: (add location)**

# Respond

## Recognise symptoms

Many deaths can be easily prevented if people know what they are looking for

* Being extremely drowsy/very hard to wake up (like a deep sleep) or being slumped over
* Snoring or gurgling can be a sign of someone struggling to breathe because of opioids
* A blue tinge to the lips or nails
* Pinpoint pupils
* Being cold and clammy

## In case of emergency

1. Call an ambulance (000)
2. Administer naloxone Spray
3. one dose into the nostril - If using the injection, inject one dose into the outer shoulder or thigh muscle
4. Note the time of administration - If no response after 2-3 minutes, repeat the dose
5. Place in the recovery position, and stay until help arrives.