

Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board Guidelines for Pharmacy Practice



Guidance for the Provision of Emergency-Use Naloxone

January 2024

1) Introduction

Opioid overdose is a very serious, life-threatening condition and a serious public health concern in Canada. Accidental overdoses can occur in individuals who use opioids as prescribed by their health care provider, those using opioids for non-medical reasons, and those that may accidentally ingest an opioid.

Naloxone, an opioid antagonist that temporarily reverses the effects of opiates such as respiratory depression, sedation, and hypotension, is a safe and effective therapy that, with proper administration, can save lives in opioid overdose situations. In the absence of an opioid, naloxone exhibits no effects and the only contraindication to its use is a known hypersensitivity.

In NL, people may access naloxone in a variety of ways, such as from the [provincial take-home naloxone program distribution sites](#)¹, harm reduction service organizations, and health care facilities, including pharmacies. Pharmacy professionals are expected to be able to provide information to the public about these access points, as well as have kits on hand in the pharmacy for emergency purposes and distribution. Additionally, members of the public can be advised to call 811 to receive information on their closest naloxone kit distribution site.

Anyone providing a person with a naloxone kit is expected to also provide the information necessary to use the kit effectively, including how to recognize the signs of an opioid overdose, what steps to take to respond to the emergency, and how to appropriately administer the naloxone. Pharmacy professionals should therefore ensure that they possess sufficient knowledge, skills, and abilities to be able to provide this information in accordance with best practices.

2) Practice Guidance

2.1 Who should receive a naloxone kit?

When determining whether to offer a naloxone kit to a person, pharmacy professionals should consider whether the person is:

- a) currently taking opioids for either medical purposes or recreational use, or is a family member or friend of someone who is; or
- b) someone who knows, or may encounter, a person taking opioids, and who would like to be prepared in the event of an accidental overdose.

2.2 What should a naloxone kit include?

Naloxone should always be provided as part of a kit that is either assembled at the pharmacy, purchased from a supplier, or obtained from the provincial program. The kit should include:

- a) at least two 1 mL ampoules or vials of naloxone hydrochloride 0.4mg/ml solution or two doses of naloxone hydrochloride 4mg/0.1ml nasal spray;
- b) at least two 3 mL syringes with attached auto-retractable 25G needles (1" length recommended) (for injectable naloxone);
- c) at least one pair of non-latex gloves;
- d) ampoule opening device (optional);
- e) rescue breathing barrier; and
- f) step-wise instructions for recognizing and responding to an opioid overdose including written and visual instructions for administering naloxone.

2.3 What information should be provided with a naloxone-kit?

Naloxone consultations should include:

¹ Pharmacy professionals can contact the provincial program if they would like information on how their pharmacy can become a distribution site for the program.

- a) a review of the contents of the naloxone kit;
- b) how to identify an opioid overdose and differentiate it from overdose of other substances;
- c) the importance of calling 911 immediately for medical assistance due to the short half-life of the drug;
- d) when and how to administer the first dose of naloxone;
- e) the use of chest compressions and/or rescue breathing;
- f) when to use the second dose of naloxone;
- g) the need to remain with the person experiencing a possible opioid overdose to provide supportive measures and to assess the need for subsequent naloxone doses while waiting for emergency first responders to arrive; and
- h) any other information deemed relevant to the circumstances.

When providing consultations on naloxone, the person should be given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss any concerns they may have.

3) Additional Resources

- a) [Government of Canada naloxone information](#)
- b) [Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Opioids and Naloxone information](#)
- c) [University of Waterloo Naloxone and Opioid resources](#)
- d) Canadian Pharmacy Journal Frequently-Asked Questions about Naloxone, [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)