

Pharmacist Prescribing of Naloxone



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Purpose: This document guides pharmacists on prescribing opioid overdose reversal medications (OORM), like naloxone, under Oregon's statewide protocol or standing order pathways. Information provided includes access improvements, patient identification, billing, and education to enhance overdose prevention and harm reduction.

What are Opioid Overdose Reversal Medications?

OORMs are lifesaving short-acting opioid overdose reversal medications. Naloxone, or brand name Narcan, is the most common.

Naloxone nasal sprays (e.g., Narcan, Padagis, and ReVive) are now available as over-the-counter medications. Naloxone, in other formulations (e.g., intramuscular, auto-injector), and nalmefene can also be prescribed by pharmacists and are partially or fully covered through insurance.

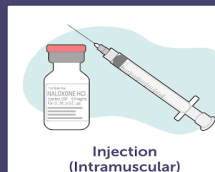
Types of Naloxone



Narcan® Nasal Spray



Nasal Spray
Intranasal



Injection
(Intramuscular)



Auto-Injector (EVZIO®)

Image from Connect without Stigma

Are pharmacists allowed to prescribe naloxone?

Pharmacists in Oregon can prescribe naloxone under a [standing order](#) authorized by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), or [statewide protocol](#) authorized by the Oregon Board of Pharmacy (OBOP). **This allows patients to access naloxone directly from the pharmacy.**

How do pharmacists improve access?

- ✓ Make offering naloxone a habit. **Normalize it to reduce stigma.**
- ✓ Place naloxone kits in your line of sight as a visual reminder. Place a kit on display for patients to see.
- ✓ Train pharmacy staff how to offer naloxone, ensuring the entire team contributes to expanding patient access.

Insights from a Pharmacist:

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Providing naloxone is an easy way to increase patient safety and reduce opioid-related deaths in our communities. Prescribing takes just a few minutes, and now with OTC options, it is even easier to connect patients with this lifesaving medication.



How to identify patients who may benefit from a naloxone prescription

- Acute opioid prescription ≥ 50 MED/day
- Chronic opioid prescription ≥ 90 MED/day
- Taking opioids with multiple sedating medications (e.g. benzodiazepines, sleep aids) or using alcohol
- Restarting an opioid or rotating opioids
- Opioid use with a renal, hepatic, respiratory or heart condition
- Receiving opioids from multiple prescribers
- Taking medications for opioid use disorder (e.g., methadone, buprenorphine)
- History of opioid overdose or intoxication
- Limited social support
- Patients purchasing syringes
- Recent abstinence (e.g., detoxification stabilization program, prison)

Pharmacist Prescribing of Naloxone

Why should I recommend/prescribe naloxone?

- Naloxone is safe and saves lives.
- Increasing access to naloxone is a proven harm reduction strategy.
- All people who take opioids are at risk for a breathing emergency.
- Pharmacists are trusted and accessible.
- It is an opportunity to provide education and increase opioid safety.

What do I have to do to prescribe naloxone?

- **There is no specific training required.**
- Review the [Board of Pharmacy rules and regulations](#).
- Review and be familiar with the [OHA-approved naloxone training documents](#).
- Review information on naloxone, including how to identify opioid overdose and administration.
- Consider taking one of the many online continuing education (CE) trainings.

How do I bill?

- Pharmacists must have a National Provider Identifier (NPI) number like that needed to bill for vaccinations.
- Health plans often cover naloxone, particularly if patients are on chronic opioid therapy and have a history of opioid use disorder.
- Naloxone is a covered benefit under OHP without prior authorization.
- A prescription for a friend or family member may not be covered by any health plan.

What do I include in patient counseling?

1. **Overdose Recognition:** Educate patients on the signs of an opioid overdose, including unresponsiveness, small pupils, slow or shallow breathing, and blue or grey lips or fingernails.
2. **Administration Training:** Provide clear instructions on how to administer naloxone, whether it's the nasal spray or injectable form. *Demonstrate if necessary.*
3. **Follow-Up Care:** Stress the importance of calling emergency services after administering naloxone, as it may not fully reverse the overdose, and additional doses may be needed.
4. **Tell Others:** Remind them to tell others around them that they have naloxone and where to find it because naloxone cannot be self-administered.

Importance of counseling

It is important for pharmacists to consult with patients about naloxone because:

- Patients may be unaware of their risk
- Patients may not understand purpose of naloxone, when to use it, how to administer a dose, or follow-up procedures

Tips for Navigating Conversations



1

Start the conversation

Be direct, concise, and anonymous

- ✓ You are a role model for your patients and coworkers.
- ✓ Think of naloxone as part of the counselling for every opioid prescription.

Use a regular and routine conversation starter

Pharmacist: "Have you heard about naloxone? I offer it to every patient I have with an opioid prescription."

Pharmacy technician: "The pharmacist recommends that everyone picking up opioids also get naloxone, in case of a breathing emergency. Is that something you would like to talk to the pharmacist about today?"

2

Language Matters

Words can be stigmatizing and can stop individuals who are at risk from asking for help.

- ✓ Use language that reduces stigma to allow for more positive and open conversations between you and your patients.



Less Stigmatizing



More Stigmatizing

"Person who uses drugs"

"Addict", "Junkie"

"Slow breathing or breathing emergency"

"Overdose"

"Patient"

"Substance or drug abuser"

- ✓ Ask patients if they would like to know about actions they can take to be safe.
 - Take prescription opioids only as directed even when they have more pain.
 - Avoiding other sedating medications and alcohol when using opioids.
 - Educate patients on the importance of storing their medications safely and securely.
 - Offer naloxone to have on hand if they or someone else shows signs of a breathing emergency.

3

If a patients decline naloxone

Be respectful. Not everyone feels like they're in a position to need naloxone. If a patient declines:

- ✓ Focus the discussion on how to safely use opioids. Let them know that if they change their mind, naloxone is always available at the pharmacy.