

# Pharmacists' Role in Naloxone Dispensing

As a pharmacist, you can reduce risks of overdose deaths by educating patients and their caregivers on the benefits of naloxone, the three forms available (nasal spray, injection, and auto-injection), how to administer it, and how to recognize an opioid overdose.<sup>1</sup>



Far too little naloxone is being dispensed in United States.<sup>2</sup>

- In 2018, rural counties had the lowest dispensing rates and were nearly 3 times more likely to be low-dispensing counties compared to metropolitan counties.
- Primary care clinicians wrote only 1.5 naloxone prescriptions per 100 high-dose opioid prescriptions—a marker for opioid overdose risk.
- Over half of naloxone prescriptions required a copay.

**Ensure naloxone is always available in your pharmacy.<sup>3</sup>**

**Currently all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico allow pharmacists to dispense naloxone without a prescription.<sup>3</sup>**



## Fact Sheet: Pharmacists

Everyone prescribed opioids is at risk for opioid overdose and should be offered naloxone. However, some situations and conditions may make an opioid overdose more likely. The following factors increase risk of opioid overdose:<sup>4</sup>

- A history of overdose
- Patients with sleep-disordered breathing
- Patients taking benzodiazepines with opioids
- Patients at risk of returning to a high dose for which they have lost tolerance (e.g., patients undergoing tapering or recently released from prison)
- Patients taking higher dosages of opioids (e.g., ≥50 MME/day)
- A history of substance use disorder



Collaborate with the health department and health systems in your local community to help educate patients, caregivers, and the community about how they can request naloxone from a pharmacist and the benefits of having naloxone readily available if they know someone who uses drugs and are likely to witness or experience an overdose.<sup>5</sup>



For more information and resources on naloxone, visit [cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/hcp/toolkits/naloxone](https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/hcp/toolkits/naloxone), and refer to the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit](#). For drug overdose prevention, visit [cdc.gov/overdose-preventions](https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-preventions).

<sup>1</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5331002/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/naloxone/index.html>

<sup>3</sup><http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6831e1>

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/rr/rr7103a1.htm?s\\_cid=rr7103a1\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/rr/rr7103a1.htm?s_cid=rr7103a1_w)

<sup>5</sup><https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/opioids-and-addiction/naloxone-advisory/index.html>