

Myths, Facts & Community Voices

CARRYING AND USING NALOXONE

Naloxone is a medicine that can quickly reverse an opioid poisoning and help someone start breathing again. It is used in emergencies to save lives when a person has taken too much of a prescribed or unregulated opioid drug.

MYTH

My doctor prescribed me opioids, I do not need to carry Naloxone.

FACTS

- Prescribed opioids can also be risky, and taking too much by accident can cause a drug poisoning. Having Naloxone could save your life!
- Children or others at home could accidentally take your prescription, leading to an opioid poisoning.

COMMUNITY VOICE

"My grandfather was prescribed opioids for pain when he had cancer. We kept Naloxone at home in case he was accidentally given an incorrect dose."

MYTH

Only people who use opioids need to carry Naloxone.

FACTS

- Anyone can witness an opioid poisoning and carrying Naloxone can save a life.
- Recreational drugs can be laced with opioids, causing an opioid poisoning in non-opioid users.
- Carrying Naloxone promotes safety, helps reduce stigma, and shows care for your community, even if you don't personally use opioids or other recreational substances.

COMMUNITY VOICE

"While taking public transportation, someone experienced an opioid poisoning. A bystander asked if anyone had Naloxone, and thankfully, I did, even though I don't use opioids or other recreational substances myself. Because of that, a life was saved that day!"

MYTH

Opioid poisoning only happens to unhoused people and/or individuals experiencing poverty.

FACTS

- Opioid use and drug poisonings do not discriminate and affect individuals across different socioeconomic statuses.
- In the Cowichan Valley, around 59% of unregulated drug poisoning deaths occur in private homes. Fewer occur outdoors (15%), in shelters or supportive housing (22%), or indoors in public buildings, medical facilities, retail spaces (4%).
- Opioid use is not always visible. People that you are close with may not feel comfortable sharing that they use opioids due to stigma. Carrying Naloxone could help save their lives in an emergency.

COMMUNITY VOICE

"I was at a fancy restaurant when someone experienced an opioid poisoning in the bathroom. It was the last place anyone expected something like that to happen. It's not always who we think that is at risk."

¹ Source: BC Coroner Service, BCCDC, Island Health (Jan-Jul 2024)

MYTH

Carrying Naloxone means supporting drug use or addiction.

FACT

- Carrying Naloxone can save a life. It's a harm-reduction tool, like a first aid kit.

COMMUNITY VOICES

"Naloxone saves lives and gives people a second chance to get treatment or continue their recovery journey. I also have a first aid kit, but do not promote accidents... I just have one it case it's needed!"

MYTH

Only medical professionals should give Naloxone.

FACT

Anyone can use Naloxone; it's easy to use with simple instructions (included in your Naloxone kit) and training (available online or at your pharmacy).

COMMUNITY VOICE

"I view Naloxone much like a defibrillator. Even though I'm not comfortable using an AED, I wouldn't hesitate to use it if someone were experiencing cardiac arrest. In the same way, I believe it's important to come out of my comfort zone to use Naloxone to save a life."

MYTH

If I carry Naloxone, I have to use it myself, and I don't feel comfortable doing that.

FACTS

- You can give your kit to someone who is comfortable/trained to use Naloxone.
- Extra doses may be needed to help someone survive an opioid poisoning.

COMMUNITY VOICE

"When I responded to an opioid poisoning, I needed a second Naloxone kit. I was glad someone else had one, if not I would not have been able to revive the person."

MYTH

I might be held responsible if I use Naloxone the wrong way.

FACTS

- In BC, the Good Samaritan Protection Act protects you if you help in an emergency, like giving Naloxone. As long as you try your best and stay within your abilities, you are safe.
- Giving Naloxone to someone not having an opioid poisoning won't harm them, as Naloxone only works on opioids.

COMMUNITY VOICE

"I feel safe using Naloxone because I know it won't harm a person. Naloxone only works by blocking opioid receptors. Giving Naloxone to someone who is not experiencing an opioid poisoning won't harm them"

MYTH

People who are revived with Naloxone are often mean or aggressive, so I shouldn't revive someone.

FACTS

- People revived with Naloxone may feel confused, upset, or be aggressive due to immediate withdrawal.
- Most people who are revived with Naloxone are simply experiencing a medical emergency that requires immediate care and support. Understanding this can help reduce stigma and promote more empathetic responses to drug poisoning situations.

COMMUNITY VOICE

"I saw someone revived with Naloxone, and they were angry at first. But later, after understanding the situation, they apologized and thanked the person who revived them."

Getting Naloxone training:

- Anyone can get trained to administer Naloxone online or at their pharmacy for free.
- For online training check: <https://towardtheheart.com/naloxone-training>



Obtaining a Naloxone kit:

- Naloxone kits are free in BC and available without a prescription.
- Find a location near you: <https://towardtheheart.com/site-finder>



Learning to recognize and respond to an opioid poisoning:

[https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-services/mental-health-substance-use-services/harm-reduction-substance-use#:~:text=Call%20the%20National%20Overdose%20Response,688%2DNORS%20\(6677\)](https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-services/mental-health-substance-use-services/harm-reduction-substance-use#:~:text=Call%20the%20National%20Overdose%20Response,688%2DNORS%20(6677))



Naloxone is essential— and so are rescue breaths:

If someone is experiencing an opioid poisoning, they may stop breathing or have slow, shallow breaths, which can lead to brain damage or death. **In addition to giving Naloxone, rescue breaths are critical** to ensure that the person is getting enough oxygen until Naloxone takes effect and normal breathing returns.

Naloxone stays effective in temperatures as high as 40°C and as low as -20°C for up to two weeks. If Naloxone is stored outside of these temperatures or is past its expiration date, it may not be as effective, but it is still safe to use. If this is the only Naloxone available when you need to respond to a opioid poisoning use it.

Source: Towards the Heart - <https://towardtheheart.com/assets/uploads/1730322846DRNpPOEMPqjfmkPwav7fqhzyWmSL7bwaYGXWvKC.pdf>

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