

# Naloxone information for health professionals

COPE

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## Overdose in Victoria

In 2017, 523 Victorians died of a drug overdose. Pharmaceutical drugs contributed to 414 of those deaths, illegal drugs 271 and alcohol 151.<sup>(1)</sup>

In many of these cases, someone else was present and could have prevented death if they had naloxone and knew how to use it.

## What is naloxone?

Naloxone is a type of medicine called an opioid antagonist which temporarily reverses the effects of opioid overdose, allowing the person to breathe again while help is on its way. Naloxone does nothing but reverse the effects of opioid drugs. It cannot be misused to get high.

## How is naloxone supplied?

Naloxone is supplied in a five-pack of one-dose (400mcg) ampoules (for injection) or as a single five-dose prefilled syringe. It is also available in a nasal spray containing 1.8mg of naloxone (equiv to a single 400mcg injection).

Ampoules and prenoxad can be prescribed by a doctor and are available through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme; normal prescription charges apply. All three are also available directly from a pharmacist without a prescription (this will cost more). For examples of naloxone prescriptions go to [www.penington.org.au/cope](http://www.penington.org.au/cope)

## How should naloxone be stored?

Naloxone comes in three formulations



<sup>1</sup> Coroners Court of Victoria. COR20162730, August 2018

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Naloxone is best stored below 25 degrees Celsius. However, naloxone is a very sturdy drug and remains effective when stored at temperatures above 25 degrees. Keeping naloxone in the box provided is recommended to avoid direct sunlight. It is advised that those with naloxone should keep it with them at all times in case it is needed.

## How is naloxone administered?

Naloxone is injected into a muscle in the upper arm or outer thigh or sprayed up the person's nose (nasal spray). Additional doses can be administered two to three minutes later (every four minutes if the person is pregnant) if there is still no response.

## Does naloxone wear off before the drugs that caused the overdose?

Yes. Naloxone usually wears off in 30 to 90 minutes, and when this happens the person may stop breathing again unless more naloxone is available. This is especially the case if they have taken other depressant drugs as well as opioids (such as alcohol or benzodiazepines).

**It is vital that you call 000.**

## Are there risks associated with naloxone use?

There are very few risks associated with naloxone use. A very small number of people have hypersensitivity to naloxone.

Is naloxone just a “safety net” that allows opioid users to use even more?

Research has shown that making naloxone available does NOT encourage people to use opioids more. The goal of distributing naloxone and educating people about how to prevent, recognise and respond to overdoses is to prevent disability and death. Other goals, such as decreasing drug use, can only be accomplished if the user is alive.

**For more information, to request training or support contact Penington Institute on 03 9650 0699 or go to [copeaustralia.com.au](http://copeaustralia.com.au)**