Maximising Opioid Safety

Keeping naloxone in your home could save a life

Why are we talking about opioid safety?

- Opioid pain medicines are prescribed to help with pain, but it’s important to know about their risks
- In Australia, 75 people are hospitalised and 2 people die every day from prescribed opioids, but these are mostly preventable
- You can take simple steps to reduce your risks

Common prescribed opioids include:
- Codeine
- Oxycodone
- Morphine
- Tapentadol
- Fentanyl
- Buprenorphine

Why should I have naloxone at home?

- Naloxone reverses the effects of opioids if you or someone else has a severe reaction
- It’s safe - even if accidentally given to someone who has not taken opioids
- In case of an emergency, you or someone else (e.g. a family member or carer) can administer naloxone while waiting for an ambulance – this could save a life

What are the most severe opioid-related risks?

- Severe reactions (loss of consciousness, slowed breathing) can be fatal
- This is sometimes called ‘overdose’ even when it happens from taking your prescribed dose
- Severe reactions are quite common, and can sometimes happen even when you follow the directions - that’s why it’s important to be prepared

What increases opioid-related risk?

- Taking extra medicine (e.g. for worse pain)
- A mix-up with your medicines (e.g. accidentally doubling up)
- Combining with alcohol or other medicines (e.g. sleeping pills or other pain medicines)
- Other changes in your health (e.g. with your liver, kidneys, or lungs)
- Someone else taking your opioid pain medicine

Naloxone is available as a nasal spray and injection

Naloxone is available at your pharmacy. Ask your pharmacist today
# OPIOID SAFETY PLAN

Share this plan with your family, friends or carer

## MAKE A PLAN

- Keep naloxone in an accessible place at home.
- Ensure that others in your home know what naloxone is used for, where it is kept, and how to use it.
- Familiarise yourself and others with the symptoms to look out for.

**My naloxone is kept:**

(location)

## REDUCE YOUR RISK

- Do not mix opioids with alcohol or other sedative medicines.
- Always stick to your prescribed dose.
- Use strategies to remember when you have taken your medicines (e.g. webster packs, marking off on a calendar).
- Stick to the same doctor and pharmacist for your treatment.
- Ask your pharmacist or doctor about other ways of managing pain.

## IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

1. **Call an ambulance (000)**

2. **Administer naloxone**
   - Spray one dose into the nostril
   - If using the injection, inject one dose into the outer shoulder or thigh muscle
   - Note the time of administration
   - If no response after 2-3 minutes, repeat the dose

3. **Place in the recovery position, and stay until help arrives**

## RECOGNISE SYMPTOMS

Many deaths can be easily prevented if people know what they are looking for.

- Being extremely drowsy/very hard to wake up (like a deep sleep) or being slumped over.
- Snoring or gurgling can be a sign of someone struggling to breathe because of opioids.
- A blue tinge to the lips or nails.
- Pinpoint pupils.
- Being cold and clammy.