

**Anyone taking opioids may be at risk for a possible overdose. The risk increases if you:**

- Take higher doses of opioids
- Take them with alcohol
- Combine them with certain medicines that also affect the brain, such as benzodiazepines (e.g. alprazolam, diazepam)
- Have other medical conditions such as liver or lung disease or depression



**What are the signs or symptoms of an opioid emergency or overdose?**

- Very slow or irregular breathing or no breathing at all
- Unusual sleepiness
- Not waking up or responding to voice commands or touch
- Center part of the eye (pupil) is very small
- Fingernails and lips turn blue or purple
- Slow heartbeat and/or low blood pressure



---

# Be Prepared for an Opioid Emergency

---

With more than one million members in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut and beyond, our mission is to improve the quality and value of health care for the people and communities we serve.



[www.harvardpilgrim.org](http://www.harvardpilgrim.org)





## What are opioids?

Opioids are commonly prescribed to manage pain.

### Some common opioids include:

- Morphine
- Codeine
- oxycodone (e.g. Oxycontin®)
- oxycodone + acetaminophen (e.g. Percocet®)
- hydrocodone + acetaminophen (e.g. Vicodin®).

## How do opioids work?

Opioids attach to “receptors” in the brain. When this happens, it sends signals to the brain that block pain, slow breathing and calm the body.

## What causes an opioid emergency?

Opioids affect the part of the brain that controls breathing. If opioid levels in your blood are too high, your breathing can slow down to dangerous levels, which can result in an emergency.

About **80%**  
of opioid overdose  
emergencies are  
deemed accidental

## WHAT CAN I DO?

NARCAN® Nasal Spray should be used right away if signs and symptoms of an opioid emergency are present. Always keep it within reach.

It is very important that if you are taking an opioid medicine, that someone around you (a spouse, family member or caregiver) recognizes the symptoms of a possible overdose. If an overdose is suspected get emergency medical help right away by calling 911.

## WHAT IS NARCAN®?

NARCAN® Nasal Spray (naloxone) is a medicine that temporarily reverses the effects of an overdose.

NARCAN® Nasal Spray is not a substitute for emergency medical care. If you suspect an opioid overdose, get emergency medical help right away.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist if a naloxone product such as NARCAN® Nasal Spray is right for you.

# DID YOU KNOW?

More than 80% of opioid overdoses occur at home when a friend or caregiver is present?

That's why it is important to keep NARCAN® Nasal Spray within reach in case of an emergency.

## WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF NARCAN® NASAL SPRAY?

In someone who uses opioids regularly, opioid withdrawal symptoms such as sweating, nausea or vomiting, increased heart rate or body aches can happen suddenly after receiving NARCAN® Nasal Spray.



## WHEN YOUR MEDICINES ARE NO LONGER NEEDED...

Always remove expired, unwanted, or unused medicines from your home as quickly as possible. This reduces the chance of someone accidentally taking or intentionally misusing the unneeded medicine. For safe disposal of your medicine, visit [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) and search “Unused Medicine Disposal.”