



Frequently asked questions about naloxone: Myths Part 1

Does naloxone breakdown if it is not stored properly?

Ideally naloxone should be kept between 15 to 30 °C and away from direct light, but studies have shown that naloxone is stable even when not stored ideally (Product Monograph, Naloxone hydrochloride injections, USP, 2011). However, individuals may carry naloxone with them or have a kit in a vehicle. Naloxone has been shown to be stable when frozen and thawed between the temperatures of -20 to 4°C, or at high temperatures of 80 °C (Lai et al., 2019). Although naloxone dosage forms normally carry an expiry date of two years, a study showed that naloxone for injection that had been expired for 30 years still contained more than 90% of active naloxone with limited degradation (Pruyn et al., 2019). Pharmacists should routinely offer replacement kits to patients as their kits expire. However, tell your patient that in an emergency situation an expired or improperly stored naloxone kit can still be effective and is unlikely to cause harm.

If I call 911 during an overdose, could I be arrested?

No, due to the Good Samaritan Act individuals are protected against most charges when reporting an overdose situation (Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act, 2017). Everyone, including the individual who is experiencing an overdose, is protected against being charged with drug possession (Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act, 2017). The act does not protect against outstanding warrants, production and selling of controlled substances, or other charges not mentioned within the Good Samaritan Act (Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act, 2017). Data collected between 2013 and 2016 showed that laypeople responding to an overdose did not call 911 30 to 65% of the time (CCENDU, 2017). Fear of law enforcement due to the illicit nature of opioids is a factor in calling 911 in an overdose situations, as bystanders feel like they will be reprimanded if they call for help. It is important to educate your patients so that they are aware of the Good Samaritan Act and have an understanding of the Act's protections. They can share this information with others present and can remove the barrier to calling 911.

Does naloxone access increase and promote opioid use?

Although more studies are needed, current evidence does not support a link between naloxone and more or riskier opioid use. One study of individuals who use heroin and individuals on opioid agonist therapy showed that there was no increase in opioid use when the participants were trained and given a naloxone kit (Jones et al., 2017). One study did find an increase emergency calls about overdoses associated with a naloxone distribution program - but calling 911 is an integral part of naloxone training (McAuley et al., 2017).