

KDHE Guidance for First Responders to Safely Administer Naloxone during the COVID-19 Pandemic

October 2020

Naloxone is a highly effective opioid overdose-reversing drug that saves thousands of lives in the United States. By taking universal safety precautions, all law enforcement, firefighters, and EMS providers can safely administer naloxone for overdose reversal, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic should not prevent the administration of Naloxone for suspected opioid overdoses. Withholding naloxone is equivalent to withholding cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to an unresponsive person who may have had a heart attack. It is essential that naloxone continue to be administered during this time.

Important considerations and steps for administering naloxone while reducing risk of COVID-19 exposure

- ✓ Use PPE including gloves and masks, regardless of the form of naloxone used. See more detailed information in the next section.
- ✓ If possible, position the person's head facing away from you.
- ✓ Administer naloxone following the instructions for use. This will entail a brief period of being less than 6 feet from another person. This administration can be done safely as long as the administrator takes care to avoid unnecessary contact.
- ✓ Start other life support measures if needed and if trained to do so, using appropriate precautions if the person is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.
- ✓ Stand up and step back to a distance of at least 6 feet as the person regains consciousness.
- ✓ If there is no response to naloxone in 2-3 minutes, a second dose should be administered.
 - Recent research has shown that in some cases, more than two doses may be necessary to reverse an opioid overdose. Follow manufacturer's instructions for additional doses, keeping in mind that most doses can be repeated at two- to three-minute intervals.
 - Keep the above guidance in mind when deciding how much naloxone to stock and carry with you.
- ✓ Assess the person, introduce yourself, and explain to them what led to naloxone administration, effects of naloxone, and importance of seeking follow-up care.
 - Stay with the person until they are stable or transported to follow-up care. Depending on the strength of the opioid in the person's system, the naloxone may wear off faster than the amount and strength of opioids consumed, potentially causing continual overdose. If continual overdose occurs, see guidance above for repeat naloxone administration.
- ✓ When safe, remove PPE following appropriate safety procedures. Dispose of disposable PPE. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

- ✓ Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and you had no skin contact with illicit drugs, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol may be substituted.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- ✓ Use PPE including gloves and masks, regardless of the form of naloxone used. Consider the use of face shields or eye protection if you are concerned about aerosolization during administration.
- ✓ If the person is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 or if you see illicit drugs in powder or liquid form, put on additional PPE as recommended by CDC including:
 - At least an N100, R100, or P100 disposable filtering facepiece respirator or a respirator that provides a higher level of protection
 - Face and eye protection that may include goggles or a face shield when wearing a filtering facepiece respirator
 - Powder-free nitrile gloves
 - Wrist/arm protection, such as sleeve covers, that would cover skin which may not be covered by usual clothing or uniform such as gowns or coveralls

References

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3. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Guidance for Law Enforcement and First Responders Administering Naloxone. Retrieved October 2020 from <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/guidance-law-enforcement-first-responders-administering-naloxone.pdf>.
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