

Take-home naloxone: A brief primer for ED clinicians

EDs can reduce opioid overdose deaths by distributing take-home naloxone (THN) kits.

Patients at high risk for opioid overdose should routinely be given THN kits when discharged from the ED (see enclosed briefing note).

EDs can receive a monthly supply of THN kits for free from the Ontario Naloxone Program (ONP).

The ONP provides both injectable and nasal spray naloxone. The following conditions remove traditional barriers to distributing kits to those most in need:

- No prescription, medical directive, or delegation is required to distribute these THN kits.
- THN kits should be stored in the ED for easy access.
- THN kits may be distributed by any ED staff, including social workers or peer workers.
- THN kits can be given to the patient or to the patient's family or friends.

THN kits should be given to all people at risk for overdose, regardless of their reason for ED visit or hospital admission. Examples include:

- Fentanyl or heroin use.
- History of overdoses.
- Household member or partner who uses illicit opioids.
- On a high dose of prescription opioids.

What to say when giving patients or family a THN kit:

1. Naloxone will reverse the effects of an overdose, just like an EpiPen reverses an anaphylactic reaction.
2. You can prevent overdose death if you always use with a companion, and if you carry a kit with you.
3. This pamphlet explains what to do if someone has overdosed.
4. [If they have an opioid use disorder:] The best way to prevent overdose death is methadone or buprenorphine treatment. Here is the contact information of our local RAAM clinic. A list of RAAM clinics is available at <http://www.metaphi.ca/>

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