



March 23, 2015

Dear Healthcare Provider:

While we know others have made attempts to disseminate information about Act 139 of 2014 and its provisions, not every healthcare provider may be aware of this new law and its purpose. Pennsylvania, like the rest of the nation, is currently suffering the worst overdose epidemic in history. To help combat unnecessary loss of life and help save the lives of Pennsylvania's most vulnerable, the General Assembly enacted Act 139, which became effective on Nov. 29, 2014. This legislation allows first responders, family members and friends the ability to obtain and administer the antidote medication, naloxone – a medication that can reverse an overdose that is caused by an opioid drug, such as a prescription pain medication or heroin.

It's critical that we have your help and support to ensure that Act 139 is fulfilling its goals and saving lives. Important elements of the legislation that should be of interest to you include:

- Naloxone is safe and legal to prescribe;
- The legislation provides legal immunity for prescribers who make naloxone accessible to individuals; and,
- Physicians, certified registered nurse practitioners, and physicians' assistants can prescribe the medication to a patient that may need to administer it to another individual.

We understand that this is new legislation and there may still be some confusion about what is permissible and how prescriptions should be written. For this reason, we ask that you please take the time to educate yourself on naloxone and consider it an option when caring for your patients and their loved ones. You can find educational and awareness materials at the following websites:

www.health.pa.gov (Under 'Hot Topics' click on Act 139 Naloxone.)

www.ddap.pa.gov (Click on the naloxone banner in the center of the home page.)

www.prescribetoprevent.org (guidance on writing prescriptions, stocking, billing, etc.)

Our goal is to alleviate any confusion about this legislation, help answer any questions you may have and continue to work with you as we implement Act 139 in Pennsylvania. We encourage you to share this information with your organization's physicians. If you have additional questions after reviewing the materials available on the websites, please contact the Department of Health at 1-877-PA-HEALTH. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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Guidance Document

Updated: November 19th, 2014

Individuals Seeking to Obtain Naloxone

Naloxone (also known by the brand names of “Narcan” and “Evzio”) is a medication that can reverse an overdose for someone who has taken too many opioids. Examples of opioids are heroin and other prescription pain medications. In the past, only heroin users or people taking pain medicines were allowed to get a prescription for naloxone. Now, a new law - Act 139 of 2014 - allows anyone who thinks they can help someone else during an overdose get a prescription for naloxone and use it on another person. ACT 139 also provides legal protections for people who intervene in the case of an overdose. It is recommended that individuals learn about overdose and how to administer naloxone. Here are important steps and things to remember when getting a prescription for naloxone:

- Make an appointment with your doctor and let him or her know that someone you care about uses heroin or prescription pain medications and could be at risk of an overdose. Explain that since the law (Act 139) now allows you to get the medication (naloxone) that can save someone having an overdose, that you would like to have a prescription for naloxone.
- Take your prescription to your local pharmacy to be filled, so that you have the medication if you ever need to give it to someone. If the pharmacy does not have a supply of the medicine, they may need to order it for you. This should only take a day or two. If you still have any questions about how to give naloxone to someone having an overdose, ask the pharmacist to go over the instructions with you when you pick up the medication at the pharmacy.
- Before giving naloxone to someone, try to be sure that they are overdosing on heroin or a prescription pain medication by being aware of overdose symptoms. You can tell if someone is having an opioid overdose by reviewing the information in the [Naloxone Fact Sheet](#). In fact, you may want to post these signs and symptoms on the refrigerator as a handy reminder so that you are ready to respond in the case of an overdose.
- Whether you have naloxone or not, if someone you know is overdosing, call 911 for medical help right away. If you have not called 911 before giving naloxone, be sure to call 911 immediately after giving naloxone. Naloxone only works short-term. Without medical help a person could go back into overdose and still die.
- Stay with the person until the ambulance or other professional help arrives.

[To print out a one-page guide on the above directions, click here.](#)

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL INFORMATION:

STORAGE AND TEMPERATURE CONTROL

Naloxone should be stored at room temperature and away from light. According to the manufacturer, the medicine should be kept out of direct light and stored at room temperature (between 59 and 77 degrees Fahrenheit). This is because very hot or cold temperatures could affect the medication in a way that causes it not to work. Do not leave it in your car or in places where it might get very hot or freeze.

SHELF LIFE – (How long the medication stays good for)

Naloxone is good for about two years after it is first made by the drug company. The expiration date will be stamped on the medication and should be checked from time to time to be sure that it is still good to use. Even if it is not past the “use by” date, the medicine could have gone bad. This might be because it got too hot or too cold. You should not use the medicine if:

- a. It is past the expiration “use by” date; and/or
- b. The medication is yellowed, cloudy or if you see tiny particles floating in it.

Remember to check the expiration date from time to time.

TRAINING

ACT 139 says that receiving training, although not required to receive a prescription, may increase the legal protections for those administering naloxone. A training should cover the following information:

- Understanding Opioid (heroin and other prescription medication) addiction, who it effects and how it effects them
- How to tell when someone is having an opioid overdose (signs and symptoms)
- How to tell one kind of overdose from another
- What to do in case of an overdose / what first-aid or rescue steps should be taken
- Information about naloxone and how this medicine works
- How to give naloxone to someone who is overdosing
- The need to call for medical help / 911 right away.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1) What is naloxone?

Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an overdose that is caused by an opioid drug (i.e. prescription pain medication or heroin). When naloxone is given during an overdose, it blocks the effects of opioids on the brain and helps a person to breathe again within two to eight minutes. Naloxone has been used safely by emergency medical professionals for more than 40 years and has only one function: to reverse the effects of opioids on the brain and respiratory system in order to prevent death. Naloxone cannot be used to get high.

2) What type of naloxone can I give to a friend or loved one in the event of a suspected overdose?

There are three common ways that naloxone can be given;

1. By spraying the medicine into the nose (intranasal)
2. By auto injector; a pre-filled, ready to use dose of the medication that gives a shot simply by pressing the medicine against a person's upper leg
3. By giving a person a shot with a needle (intramuscular)

The following pictures show the different ways that naloxone can be given. These vary in price and availability and you should talk to your doctor about which kind of naloxone would be best for you.

NASAL SPRAY:



The piece that attaches to the medicine and fits into the nose (Nasal Atomization Device) does not come in the same package as the medication. It is sold separately, but your drug store should be able to order it for you to get when you pick up your prescription. If you cannot get the nose piece from your drug store, it can be ordered from a number of medical supply companies without a prescription.

AUTO-INJECTOR:

Using an auto-injector in a pre-filled, ready to give unit (similar to an epi-pen)

On April 3, 2014, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the first naloxone auto-injector which can be used intramuscularly or just below the skin of the thigh area or upper part of the leg. This way of giving someone naloxone is ready to use. You will not have to fill a needle or attach a nasal piece. It also has recording that speaks to you as you are using the medication; it tells you step by step how to give the naloxone. To read more about this product please visit: <http://evzio.com/patient/about-evzio/what-is-evzio.php>



Dimensions
3 3/8" high
2" wide
5/8" thick



About the height and
width of a credit card



About the thickness
of a smartphone

Intramuscular administration – (SHOT, USING A NEEDLE):

If you use this way to give naloxone, you will get a small bottle of medicine and a needle/syringe. You will give the person a shot of naloxone. For information on where on the body to give the shot, ask your doctor or pharmacist.



3) After I obtain a prescription, where can I go to purchase the naloxone?

Whatever form of naloxone is prescribed to you, the medication is only available by taking your prescription to a drug store. It cannot be bought over-the-counter like Tylenol® or vitamins. Because naloxone was not available to friends and loved ones until this new law passed, a drug store may not have it on hand. If the drug store does not already have naloxone in stock, they may need to order it for you. You will also need the other supplies that go with it, such as the piece that goes into the nose or a needle. It should only take a couple of days for the medicine to arrive at the drug store. If you have problems getting the medicine at one drug store, check around at another drug store that may carry it or is willing to order it for you.

4) Where do I find an approved online training?

The following online trainings have been approved by the Department of Health and will provide a certificate upon completion: <http://www.getnaloxonenow.org> OR <https://www.pavtn.net/act-139-training>. Please continue to visit The Pennsylvania Department of Health or the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs websites for additional approved training venues and supportive information as they become available.

5) How is someone who gives naloxone to someone else protected by the law as described in ACT 139?

Concern about liability should not deter anyone from using naloxone to save a life. There are no known law suits from the use of naloxone. This insignificant legal risk goes away when you do the following:

1. Prior to giving the naloxone, you believed that the person was suffering from an opioid (heroin or other prescription medicine) overdose.
2. You completed a brief training prior to using the medication on someone having an overdose.
3. Before, or right after giving the naloxone medication, you called 911 for medical help.

6) How can I encourage someone who has lived through an overdose to get the treatment they need?

Tell the person who has recently survived an overdose that help from addiction is available and that he or she can fully recover from addiction. Caring professionals work at drug treatment programs and county drug and alcohol offices; they can help a person get the help he or she needs. You can get information about the services available in your county by visiting the following website: <http://www.ddap.pa.gov/needhelpnow> .