

### Co-prescribing Naloxone with Opioids

Drug overdose is one of the leading causes of accidental death in the U.S., with 47,600 (67.8%) of 70,237 drug overdose deaths in 2017 involving an opioid.<sup>1,2</sup> In response, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a nationwide advisory in 2018 urging more Americans to carry naloxone.<sup>3</sup> As of January 2019, Assembly Bill 2760 requires California prescribers to provide education and offer high-risk patients a prescription for naloxone.<sup>4</sup>

#### Why should naloxone be offered to patients?

Naloxone is a highly competitive mu-opioid receptor antagonist that readily displaces the opioid and temporarily reverses its fatal effects, such as respiratory depression.<sup>3,5</sup> Implementation of overdose education and naloxone distribution in the communities has been demonstrated to reduce opioid overdose-related death rates by up to 46 percent.<sup>6</sup> In a 2010 survey, 188 naloxone distribution programs reported training and distributing naloxone to over 53,000 persons since 1996 and receiving 10,171 cases of overdose reversals.<sup>7</sup> A recent 2019 study also showed an association between pharmacists' authority to furnish naloxone and statistically significant reductions in fatal overdoses among Medicaid beneficiaries, highlighting the impact of increased naloxone access on reducing overdose deaths.<sup>8</sup>

#### Who should receive naloxone?

The CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain recommends co-prescription of naloxone when one or more of the following risk factors for overdose are present:<sup>9</sup>

- History of overdose
- History of substance use disorder
- Higher opioid dosages ( $\geq 50$  morphine milligram equivalents (MME)/day)
- Concurrent benzodiazepine use

Additionally, the California Civil Code §1714.22 allows for licensed health care providers to prescribe naloxone to a family member, friend, or other person in a position to assist a person at risk of an overdose.<sup>10</sup>

Consider the following opioid reversal agents for your patients at high risk for opioid overdose:

| Formulations                        | Recommended Dosing <sup>5</sup>  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| naloxone 0.4 mg/mL Carpuject        | Inject 0.4-2 mg intramuscularly or subcutaneously.<br>Repeat every 2 to 3 minutes as needed until medical assistance becomes available.              |
| naloxone 2 mg/2 mL syringe          |  |
| naloxone 0.4 mg/mL, 4 mg/10 mL vial |  |
| naloxone (Narcan) 4 mg nasal spray  | Place one spray as a single dose in one nostril; may repeat every 2 to 3 minutes in alternating nostrils until medical assistance becomes available. |

#### References

1. National Safety Council Injury Facts. Odds of dying. <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/all-injuries/preventable-death-overview/odds-of-dying/>. Accessed May 29, 2019.
2. Scholl L, Seth P, Kariisa M, et al. Drug and Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths – United States, 2013-2017. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2019;67(5152):1419-1427.
3. Office of the Surgeon General. U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on Naloxone and Opioid Overdose. US Department of Health & Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/opioids-and-addiction/naloxone-advisory/index.html>. Published 2018. Accessed May 29, 2019.
4. California Legislative Information. AB-2760 Prescription Drugs: prescribers: naloxone hydrochloride and other FDA-approved drugs. [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180AB2760](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB2760). Published September 10, 2018. Accessed April 24, 2019.
5. Naloxone hydrochloride. Lexi-Drugs. LexiComp. Wolters Kluwer Health, Inc. Riverwoods, IL. Available at <http://online.lexi.com>. Accessed May 29, 2019.
6. Walley AY, Xuan Z, Hackman HH, et al. Opioid overdose rates and implementation of overdose education and nasal naloxone distribution in Massachusetts: interrupted time series analysis. *BMJ*. 2013;346: f174.
7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Community-based opioid overdose prevention programs providing naloxone - United States, 2010. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 2012; 61:101-105.
8. Abouk R, Pacula RL, Powell D. Association between State laws facilitating pharmacy distribution of naloxone and risk of fatal overdose. *JAMA Intern Med*. Published online May 6, 2019. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2019.0272.
9. Dowell D, Haegerich TM, Chou R. CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain — United States, 2016. *MMWR Recomm Rep* 2016;65(No. RR-1):1-49.
10. An act to amend Section 1714.22 of the Civil Code, relating to drug overdose treatment. Cal. Civil Code §1714.22 (2014).

Medi-Cal Educational Bulletins are available through the CalOptima website at [www.caloptima.org](http://www.caloptima.org): Providers-Medi-Cal Pharmacy Resources

The CalOptima Approved Drug List is available on our website: [www.caloptima.org](http://www.caloptima.org)  
and for PDA download at [www.epocrates.com](http://www.epocrates.com)