

Speaker 1: Chances are you know someone who uses a prescribed opioid medication to manage a health issue. If you do, there's a chance that you know of someone who has suffered an accidental overdose. Opioid overdose is a serious, tragic and quickly growing problem that affects every part of the country and cuts across every community. It can happen to anyone who's using an opioid no matter how careful they are. The causes range from user prescription error to mixing opioids with alcohol, self-medication, sharing medications with others or failing to properly and safely store them under lock and key. But, whatever the cause, it's crucial that you know the signs. Failure to recognize the symptoms of opioid overdose can be fatal.

Donna K.: Opioid overdose has increased in the community at large really over the past two decades whereas now it has become the most common cause of unintentional death. I think it's happened because of the convergence of an increased prevalence of opioid abuse, the lack of appropriate treatment strategies for people suffering from opioid use disorder. That's where we have seen the explosion of opioid overdose.

Speaker 1: How can you tell when someone is suffering from an opioid overdose? The three most obvious signs are: partial or complete loss of consciousness, breathing that's slowed or even stopped and small or pinpoint pupils.

Donna K.: Well, it's important to recognize that this is someone that you know is on an opioid. You might notice that they become less and less responsive or perhaps inappropriate in their responses. You might notice that they're stumbling or become off balance. You might even notice that they have passed out on the couch. You may notice that they are not breathing as vigorously as usual. They might even start turning blue because they're not oxygenating appropriately. If you open their eyes, you might notice that their pupils are very small. Those would be the telltale signs of an opioid overdose.

It can be very difficult to recognize these signs in yourself. But if you are taking an opioid and feel like you're unsteady, feel like you're going to pass out or have difficulty breathing, it's important to let someone know or call 911.

Speaker 1: Now, that you know what signs to look for so you can identify an opioid overdose, what exactly should you do? You need to be prepared to take immediate action. Your first step as in any life-threatening emergency is call 911 and alert first responders but, perhaps even more important, be prepared. If you know anyone who is using opioid medications or may come in contact with an opioid user, you should have access to a medication called naloxone that has saved thousands of lives by rapidly helping people recover from opioid overdoses.

Donna K.: Administering naloxone in the setting of an overdose, when someone is out cold or not breathing, naloxone completely reverses those effects and they wake up and start breathing again. It saves life.

Speaker 1: When administered properly and immediately, naloxone can quickly restore normal respiration even in cases where a person has stopped breathing. Naloxone, which you may know by the name Narcan, is administered in two ways, either nasal spray or

injected into a muscle. The nasal spray is a prefilled device that is no needle, it's no assembly and it's sprayed into a nostril while a patient is on his or her back. When it comes to injectables, there are two types: a traditional prefilled syringe and even a device that talks you through each step. Both are designed to be injected into the patient's outer thigh.

Speaker 3: If you are ready to use, pull off red safety guard. To inject, place black end against outer thigh. Then press firmly and hold in place for five seconds. Injection complete.

Donna K.: It's important to be prepared because opioid overdose can happen to anyone at anytime. The more people we have educated about naloxone and how to act in a situation of opioid overdose can be part of the solution to this ever growing problem.

Speaker 1: It's more important than ever that you know the causes of accidental opioid overdoses. It's critical that you understand and recognize the symptoms and you're prepared to respond with naloxone. Being aware and being prepared can literally be the difference between life and death.