



Did You Know?

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Heroin use is still skyrocketing and admissions for treatment citing heroin as the primary substance of abuse is at the highest levels ever. Therefore, it is important to understand the drug, drug treatment, and the life-saving drug, Narcan (Naloxone), which works to reverse a heroin overdose.

Because heroin is more potent than painkillers, overdose is a very real possibility. Heroin overdose occurs when the body cannot handle the amount of heroin ingested. Signs and symptoms of a heroin overdose include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Decreased breathing
- Constipation
- Stomach cramps
- Dilated pupils
- White patches on the tongue
- Drop in blood pressure
- Reduced heart rate
- Sleepiness
- Muscle spasms
- Dry mouth
- Bluish tinge to the mouth
- Bluish tinge on the fingernails
- Confusion

Facts about Narcan:

- Narcan is a drug that reverses the effects of a heroin overdose.
- It comes in two forms: an injectable or a nasal spray.
- Anyone can become trained to recognize and respond to an opiate overdose and administer Narcan.
- Once a person becomes a trained Narcan administrator, he/she can administer it at any time it is necessary, but must complete a Narcan refresher course every two years.
- If a person receives Narcan and opiates are not present in the system, Narcan will neither help nor hurt the victim.
- If the heroin abuser receives Narcan and is actually overdosing, there is a good chance it will save that person's life.
- Narcan only works for a short window of time, emergency personnel needs to be contacted because the victim will still be at risk once the Narcan wears off.
- It is important to note that Narcan does not work 100% of the time
- Narcan may not be as effective and more than one dose may be needed if the heroin was laced with another substance such as Fentanyl
- CALL 911 FIRST before administering Narcan, so emergency personnel can arrive quickly to the scene and help with the situation. Always encourage the individual to go to the hospital, as Narcan will put the victim into immediate withdrawal.
- Narcan has an expiration date and should be stored at room temperature. Extreme temperature changes will decrease its effectiveness.

This publication was created in collaboration with Horizon Health Services, Inc.

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