

# Save a Life with Naloxone

Almost everyday someone in Rhode Island dies of a drug overdose. The stressors and isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the presence of the very strong opioid, fentanyl, in illicit drugs has accelerated Rhode Island's drug overdose epidemic.

Drug overdoses can be prevented by knowing the signs and how to respond with the overdose reversal medicine, naloxone.

## Know the Signs of a Drug Overdose

Drug overdoses can happen when too high of a dose of a substance can cause a person's breathing to slow down or even stop. When a person stops breathing because of a substance, this is an overdose. An overdose can happen to anyone.

If you have friends or family who use drugs, it's important to know what an overdose looks like in case it happens. The following are symptoms of an overdose: • **Blue or pale skin** • **Small pupils** • **Low blood pressure** • **Slow heart beat** • **Slow or shallow breathing** snoring sound • **Gasping for breath**



## How to Respond to a Drug Overdose

Once you recognize that someone is overdosing, you can take action by calling 9-1-1 and giving naloxone. The overdose reversal medication, naloxone (sometimes referred to as Narcan®), is a medicine that can stop an opioid overdose—like an overdose caused by fentanyl or heroin. Naloxone is safe and easy to use and only works if a person has opioids in their body.


Naloxone is a life saver, just like a seat belt or fire extinguisher. It can restore a person's breathing and reverse an overdose. Learn more about naloxone by [watching this video](#).

If you give naloxone to someone who is overdosing, you are protected by Rhode Island's Good Samaritan Law and cannot be arrested.


### How to Recognize an Overdose

#### Common signs to look out for


**Slow breathing**  
A person may have very slow, shallow breaths, make gurgling noises, or stop breathing.



**Trouble waking up**  
A person may be awake but unable to talk, or may not respond when you try to wake them up.




**Turning Pale**  
They could look very pale or have blue lips and fingernails.



**What to do next?** | Call 911, give naloxone, and begin rescue breathing if the person doesn't respond.

We all have a role to play in ending the overdose crisis. What's yours? Find out at [PreventOverdoseRI.org](#)



### How to Respond to an Overdose

**Try to wake them up**  
Call their name and rub the middle of their chest with a closed fist.



**Call 911**  
The Good Samaritan Law protects you from arrest for possession of drugs.



**Give naloxone**  
Follow the directions for nasal or intramuscular naloxone kits.



**Start rescue breathing**  
Make sure their mouth is not blocked, pinch their nose, and breathe into their mouth every 5 seconds.



**Recovery position**  
If you can't stay to wait for help, put the person on their side supported by a bent knee.



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## Get Naloxone and Naloxone Training

In Rhode Island, people can get naloxone at a local pharmacy without a prescription from a healthcare provider. When you buy naloxone at a pharmacy, the pharmacist can show you how to use it.

Members of the public can also request a free naloxone kit, safer drug use supplies, and connection to a certified peer recovery support specialist by visiting Rhode Island's overdose information website, [PreventOverdoseRI.org](#). Supplies can be mailed anywhere in the state at no cost to the recipient.

PreventOverdoseRI.org offers a brief, interactive naloxone training in English and Spanish. People requesting naloxone are encouraged to take the brief online training module to learn the signs of an overdose and how to respond.

## Did You Know?

- People who take prescription medicines like benzodiazepines (anti-anxiety medicines like Ativan® or Xanax®) in combination with prescription opioids are at a greater risk of having an accidental overdose.
- The same is true with people who drink alcohol while taking an opioid, or for those who are taking sedating medicines with opioids. Both alcohol and sedating medicines slow down breathing, and if taken together with opioids, can increase the chances for an accidental overdose.
- In high-risk patient cases, healthcare providers will co-prescribe naloxone along with an opioid prescription. If a person is at high-risk of an overdose, it is essential to have naloxone on-hand at all times.



## Connect to Local Resources

If you or someone you care about is living with a substance use disorder, let them know they are not alone. There are 24/7 treatment and mental health supports available over the phone or in person.

- BH Link, Rhode Island's behavioral health hotline, 401-414-LINK (5465), connects callers to trained professionals who can provide confidential counseling, referrals and support services. People can go to BH Link's drop-in center in-person to get connected to support at 975 Waterman Ave. in East Providence. Hablamos español.

- The Buprenorphine Hotline, 401-606-5456, provides telehealth services for people experiencing opioid withdrawal. Callers can learn about Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) options and make a plan for continued treatment and recovery support through a Rhode Island Center of Excellence. Rhode Island Centers of Excellence are specialty centers that use evidence-based practices and provide treatment and the coordination of care to individuals with moderate to severe opioid use disorder.

- Safe Stations are fire stations in East Providence, Providence, Newport, and Woonsocket that are open to help people in crisis get connected to a peer recovery support specialist and local treatment services.