

Naloxone in the workplace

OHS information for workers and employers

KEY INFORMATION

- Naloxone is a drug that can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose (such as from fentanyl)
- Naloxone is only one element in the care and treatment for opioid/fentanyl overdose
- A worker should apply their knowledge, training and competency to respond to an emergency situation
- First aiders should not administer naloxone unless specifically trained in hazard assessment and treatment for opioid overdoses.

This document provides guidance to Alberta employers to help ensure the protection of workers in an emergency when naloxone is used in the workplace. Workers should also be aware of naloxone and the health and safety factors when used in the workplace.

THE HAZARDS: What are the hazards of naloxone administration?

Employers should be aware of health and safety factors when they choose to provide naloxone kits to workers who act in response to fentanyl or other opioid poisoning/overdose in the workplace.

Naloxone administration includes not only the drug but the equipment required to carry out that action:

- **physical:** violence, sharps, strains/sprains;
- **chemical:** opioids eg. fentanyl (inhalation, ingestion, skin contact);
- **biological:** blood and bodily fluids;
- **psychological:** workplace stress, violence.

Can and should workers give naloxone?

Employers should consider the following when deciding whether to provide naloxone at the worksite and train workers on its use:

- are workers likely to be in contact with individuals are using illicit opioids including fentanyl or have them in their possession?
- are workers required to go into environments where opioids including fentanyl contamination are likely to be on the premises?

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- Health care professionals must adhere to their scope of practice under the Health Professions Act (HPA), professional license, and competencies
- Employers are responsible for the hazard assessment and management associated with storage, access, and expiry dates of naloxone kits
- If naloxone kits are provided, employers should determine the number of doses required and available in the event the worker administering the dose may also become exposed while responding
- Legal implications when administering a medication (prescription and non-prescription)

- are workers acting in the capacity of remediation of fentanyl labs?
- what circumstances are workers likely to respond to where naloxone would be required as a rescue treatment?
- what first aid measures should be taken to address the life threatening factors assessed by the designated first aider?
- what actions should be considered if the worker could be exposed to opioids?

Factors to consider include:

- competency of the worker;
- employer liability;
- medication administration must be in accordance with the law, legislation, training and competency and if naloxone kits are implemented in the workplace for worker use, employers need to understand and develop policies, procedures and training.

The employer should consider the level of activity of the worker is engaged in and the appropriate training, competency, and liability.

THE CONTROLS: How do you protect workers who may be required to give naloxone in the workplace?

The Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act, Regulation and Code applies to most employers and workers in Alberta. The employer has an overall obligation to protect the health and safety of all their workers.

If the employer decides to provide naloxone in the workplace, the employer must:

- conduct a hazard assessment and ensure that the appropriate controls are available and in place to protect workers who may be

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involved with the administration of naloxone.

- develop safe work procedures and provide training to workers regarding the procedures and competencies required for naloxone administration.
- ensure that all equipment used at the work site is in proper working condition and used in accordance with the manufacturer specifications. **This includes the appropriate maintenance, inventory, and storage of naloxone kits.**
- assess the risk of worker exposure to hazards related to administration of naloxone.
- Identify controls to reduce the risk of exposure to hazards in the workplace: elimination, engineering, administrative and personal protective equipment (PPE).

The worker must:

- participate in training provided by the employer.
- be competent to perform the duties associated with naloxone administration activities.
- be aware of the hazards associated with naloxone administration activities.
- Ensure he/she is familiar with and complies with the employer's emergency response procedures when responding to an opioid overdose (such as fentanyl).
- Ensure that he/she is familiar with measures to protect him/herself from inadvertent exposure to opioids while giving naloxone to another individual if this is expected of the worker in her/her job duties. Depending on the nature of the work or changes in work environments the OHS legislation may have additional requirements that must be followed.

Employers are responsible for their workers and should perform their own assessment and identify whether they should carry naloxone kits. Employers that create programs surrounding the use of naloxone kits by their workers, must ensure that the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act, Regulations and Code are followed and applicable to the work environment. Employers should anticipate that there may be laws and legislation associated with medication administration that is separate from OHS legislation.

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Contact Us

OHS Contact Centre

Edmonton & Surrounding area

- 780-415-8690

Throughout Alberta

- 1-866-415-8690

Deaf or hearing impaired:

- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)
- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)

Website

work.alberta.ca/ohs

Get Copies of OHS Act, Regulation and Code

Alberta Queen's Printer

www.qp.gov.ab.ca

Occupational Health and Safety

work.alberta.ca/ohs-legislation

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- NIOSH; Fentanyl: Preventing Occupational Exposure to Emergency Responders
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/fentanyl/risk.html>
- Workplace First Aiders and Legal Requirements
<http://work.alberta.ca/documents/OHS-bulletin-fa011.pdf>
- Hazard Assessment handbook:
<http://work.alberta.ca/documents/ohs-best-practices-BP018.pdf>
- Medication in First Aid Kits OHS information for employers:
<http://work.alberta.ca/documents/OHS-bulletin-fa014.pdf>

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