



# NALOXONE OVERDOSE RESPONSE

*Recognize the Signs. Respond. Save a Life.*

TRAINING GUIDE • EMERGENCY RESPONSE STEPS • 2026

## WHY THIS MATTERS

# Naloxone is safe, fast, and it saves lives

# 120

Boston opioid overdose deaths  
in 2025 —  
still 120 too many.

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Naloxone is the single most  
effective tool for preventing the  
next one.



### Works in 2–5 minutes

Naloxone blocks opioids from the brain's receptors almost immediately, restoring normal breathing within minutes of administration.



### Always safe to give

Naloxone only works on opioids. If someone hasn't taken any, it has no effect. When in doubt, give it anyway — it cannot hurt them.

## STEP 1: RECOGNIZE

# Know the signs of an opioid overdose

If you see even one of these signs, it's always better to act than to wait.



### Unresponsive

Won't wake up to shouting, a sternum rub, or shaking.



### Slow or no breathing

Fewer than one breath every 5 seconds, or none at all.



### Blue or gray lips & fingertips

A sign the body isn't getting enough oxygen.



### Pinpoint pupils

Pupils are very small, even in dim light.



### Gurgling or choking sounds

Often called the "death rattle" — a medical emergency.



### Limp body, clammy skin

Body goes limp; skin feels cold, pale, or clammy.

## STEP 2: RESPOND

# The response sequence — six steps, in order

### 1 Check & Stimulate

Shout their name. Rub your knuckles hard on their sternum.

### 2 Call 911

Say "someone is not breathing." Good Samaritan law protects you.

### 3 Give Naloxone

Spray one full dose into one nostril.

### 4 Rescue Breathing

One breath every 5 seconds if they're not breathing.

### 5 Watch & Repeat

No response in 2–3 min? Give a second dose, other nostril.

### 6 Stay & Monitor

Place on their side. Stay with them until help arrives.

## HOW TO USE IT

# Giving naloxone nasal spray (e.g. Narcan®)

No assembly, no needle. The device is ready to use straight out of the box.



*Step 1*

## Peel & open

Peel back the package. Remove the device — don't test or prime it first; it's ready to go.



*Step 2*

## Tilt & insert

Tilt their head back. Gently insert the nozzle into one nostril until your fingers touch the bottom of their nose.



*Step 3*

## Press firmly

Press the plunger firmly to release the full dose. Then lay them on their side.

*It's common to need more than one dose to bring someone back. That's normal, not a failure.*

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

# After naloxone — what to expect



### It wears off faster than the opioid

Effects begin in 2–5 minutes but can fade in 30–90 minutes — often sooner than the opioid itself. Overdose symptoms can return; stay until help arrives.



### No response? Give a second dose

If there's no improvement within 2–3 minutes, give another dose in the other nostril. Keep doing rescue breaths the whole time.



### They may wake up confused or upset

Naloxone can trigger sudden, uncomfortable withdrawal. Stay calm, explain what happened, and give them space if they're agitated.



### Keep breathing for them

Naloxone doesn't restart breathing by itself right away — rescue breaths matter just as much as the dose itself.

## KNOW YOUR PROTECTIONS

# Calling 911 will not get you arrested



## Massachusetts' Good Samaritan Law

Protects both the caller and the person who overdosed from being charged with drug possession or being under the influence, when the overdose is reported in good faith.

*That means the only thing that matters in the moment is getting help — not what's in the room.*



**This is general information, not legal advice.** The protection covers drug possession and use charges tied to the overdose call — it does not cover outstanding warrants or trafficking charges. When in doubt, calling for help is still the right call.

## GET EQUIPPED

# Where to get naloxone — for free, no questions asked.



### Pharmacies

*No prescription needed*

Massachusetts' standing order lets any pharmacist dispense naloxone directly to you, free of charge with most insurance.



### Life Force Harm Reduction

*Free kits & training*

Get a free kit and hands-on training at our pop-up sites, partner venues, and community events.



### MA DPH Mail Program

*Delivered to your door*

The state's free naloxone mail-order program ships kits directly and discreetly to your home.

*Carrying naloxone is legal for anyone in Massachusetts — you don't need to be a medical professional to save a life.*

## BE PREPARED

# What's in a naloxone kit

Carry a naloxone kit to be prepared in case of overdose.



**2 doses of naloxone nasal spray**

Two 4mg doses — enough for a first dose and a follow-up if needed



**Rescue breathing face shield**

A barrier for safer rescue breaths



**A pair of gloves**

For your own protection while you help



**Step-by-step instruction card**

A quick-glance guide for when seconds count



**Fentanyl test strips (optional)**


To check substances before use, where available

SAVE THIS

# Quick reference: responding to an overdose

- ✓ Check responsiveness — shout their name, rub the sternum hard
- ✓ Call 911 — say "someone is not breathing"
- ✓ Give one dose of naloxone in one nostril
- ✓ Give rescue breaths — one every 5 seconds
- ✓ No change in 2–3 minutes? Give a second dose, other nostril
- ✓ Place them on their side and stay until help arrives

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 **Emergency: 911 | Mass Substance Use Helpline: 800-327-5050**



# Every second counts. Every dose can save a life.

*You don't need to be a medical professional to respond to an overdose — you just need to know the steps and be willing to act.*



**Life Force Harm Reduction • Get Home Safe**

Request a free naloxone kit or training: contact us to learn more.