

The Occupational Therapist's Role in Naloxone Administration

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Naloxone is a medication that is used to treat overdoses from opioids such as fentanyl, heroin, and morphine. Given the current public health emergency and Naloxone's life-saving properties, several federal and provincial initiatives have been taken to improve its access, including the ability for health professionals such as occupational therapists to distribute and administer it.

Occupational therapists work in a variety of practice settings with individuals who are at risk of an opioid-related overdose.

Administering Naloxone

In a hospital setting

Naloxone is a Schedule 2 (restricted) drug that, as such, cannot be administered by an occupational therapist. OTs must comply with their employer's policies and procedures with respect to Naloxone administration.

Outside a hospital setting

On March 22, 2016, Health Canada removed Naloxone Hydrochloride from the Prescription Drug List for emergency use outside hospital settings for opioid overdose. In such settings, OTs may find themselves in unexpected circumstances where they may be required to respond to a client or other individual who is experiencing an opioid overdose. *An overdose is always an emergency.* In such circumstances, an OT with access to Naloxone may administer the overdose medication.

Distributing Naloxone

In Alberta, any person who uses, knows someone who uses, or who is (or may be) around street drugs *may obtain and, where appropriate, distribute* Naloxone kits without a prescription. Kits, and training in their use, are widely available. ⁱ

ⁱ See <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page12491.aspx>

