



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

Options for Opioid Treatment in Minnesota and Overdose Prevention

People who have an opioid use disorder should know about treatment options that are available. Here is a brief description of some of the options.

Counseling

Individual and group counseling often focus on getting a person to stop using drugs. Treatment then shifts to helping the person stay free of drugs. The counselor tries to help the person:

- See the problem and make changes
- Repair damaged relationships
- Build new community with people who do not use drugs

Members of counseling groups support each other and help find ways to live without using drugs. Group members also share their experiences and talk about their feelings and problems, and many find that others have similar problems. Counseling groups may also explore spirituality and its role in recovery.

Education groups help people learn about their illness and how to manage it. People learn about the effects of drug abuse on their brains and bodies. Training can include learning and practicing employment skills, leisure activities, communication skills, social skills, anger management, stress management, goal setting, and money and time management.

Medication-assisted therapy

Medications, in combination with counseling and other behavioral therapies, are an important element of treatment for many patients. Medications that can help individuals addicted to heroin or other opioids stabilize their lives and reduce illicit drug use include:

- Buprenorphine
- Methadone
- Naltrexone

Because methadone and buprenorphine are themselves opioids, some people view these treatments for opioid dependence as substitutions of one addictive drug for another. However, taking these medications as prescribed allows people to hold jobs, avoid street crime and violence, and reduce their exposure to HIV by stopping or decreasing injection drug use and drug-related high-risk sexual behavior. Patients stabilized on these medications can also engage more readily in counseling and other behavioral interventions essential to recovery.

Mental health groups

Emotional problems are common among those with substance use disorders, such as depression, anxiety, or posttraumatic stress disorder. By treating both the substance use and mental disorders at the same time, the odds of recovery increase. Programs may provide mental health care within the program or may refer people to other sites for this care. Mental health care may include the use of medications, such as anti-depressants.

Programs provide mental health education through lectures, discussions activities and group meetings. Some programs provide counseling for families or couples, which can be especially helpful. Parents need to be involved in treatment planning and follow-up care decisions for adolescents.

Self-help groups

Self-help groups have been shown to help people maintain recovery. Participants in self-help groups encourage one another to live without drugs. Twelve-step programs may be the best known. Alcoholics Anonymous is widely known and available, and some individuals with opioid addiction have found help there. Other self-help groups include:

- Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
- SMART (Self-Management and Recovery Training) Recovery
- Women for Sobriety
- Secular Organizations for Sobriety (SOS)

Self-help group members themselves run these groups, not trained counselors.

Self-help groups are not the same as treatment. However, many treatment programs recommend or require attendance at self-help groups. Some treatment programs encourage people to find a “sponsor,” who has been in the group for a while and can offer personal support and advice. Self-help groups for family members also exist and there are self-help groups for people with particular needs.

Opiate Overdose

Opiate overdoses interfere with a person’s ability to distribute oxygen throughout the body. Signs and symptoms of an opiate overdose include:

- Unconsciousness
- Irregular or stopped breathing
- Turning blue

Overdose Risk Factors and Prevention Techniques There are several things that increase a person’s risk for overdosing and ways to prevent them. These include:

Changes in the quality or purity of opiates—try to use the same dealer
Changes in tolerance, especially after a period of abstinence—use less than you did before
Mixing drugs— never mix opiates with benzo’s, alcohol or other opiates
Using alone—make sure somebody knows you are going to use.

Naloxone (Narcan)

Naloxone, brand name Narcan, is a non-addictive, harmless and effective medication that reverses an opiate overdose. Within minutes after Naloxone is administered, this life saving medication allows the affected person to breathe again. There are two ways that Naloxone can be administered, a shot in the muscle with a needle or a nasal spray. Naloxone is not a controlled substance, has no abuse potential and can be administered by ordinary citizens with little or no formal training.

Immunity from prosecution

A person in need of medical assistance or an individual who calls 911 during a drug overdose cannot be prosecuted for possession of drugs or for possession of drug paraphernalia.

Obtaining Naloxone

To obtain Naloxone you can visit your primary care provider or contact the following agencies:

- Valhalla Place
- The Minnesota AIDS Project
- Rural AIDS Action Network
- Sacred Spirits
- Steve Rummeler Hope Foundation
- Fargo/Moorhead Good Neighbor Project
- HCMC Addiction Medicine Clinic
- Mercy Hospital/Allina Health Emergency Dept. in Coon Rapids Abbott Northwestern/Allina Health Emergency Dept. in Minneapolis

More information is available at:

- [Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment](#)
- [What is Substance Abuse Treatment Booklet for Families](#)
- Contact the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division, by email at dhs.adad@state.mn.us or by calling 651-431-2460
- [Naloxone for Overdose Prevention](#)
- [Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit](#)
- [Medication-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Addiction facts for families and friends](#)

