

Opioid Poisoning Response and COVID-19

Community Based Naloxone Program Recommendations on Suspected Opioid Poisoning Response in the Community

Due to the rapidly evolving nature of COVID-19 in Alberta, all information in this document is current but may be updated at any time. For current information on COVID-19 in Alberta, visit ahs.ca/covid.

Poisoning response requires close proximity to the individual needing care, which may present a potential risk for exposure to COVID-19 to the responder. Providing rescue breathing to someone infected with COVID-19 would be considered a substantial exposure and it is unknown how a one-way rescue breathing mask may impact the risk of transmission. Individuals over 60 years of age and those with pre-existing health conditions are most at risk of severe symptoms from COVID-19. It is at the discretion of the responder to perform rescue breaths or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) as part of the poisoning response. This document can be used to support individuals when responding to suspected opioid poisoning with a Community Based Naloxone Kit.

Recommendations for Suspected Opioid Poisoning Response

- Call 911. If COVID-19 is suspected, tell the 911 operator.
 - See [Symptoms](#) of COVID-19.
- Anyone not responding to the suspected opioid poisoning event should leave the room or immediate area.
- If available, don Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including gown, face mask, eye protection and gloves.
 - See the following AHS infographics on PPE:
 - [Modified PPE for Suspect or Confirmed COVID-19 in Vulnerable Populations outside of Healthcare Facilities](#)
 - [Putting on \(Donning\) Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)
 - [Taking off \(Doffing\) Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#).
 - If PPE is not available, put on the gloves included in the naloxone kit.
- Administer naloxone.
- If you choose to provide rescue breaths, use the one-way rescue breathing mask included in the naloxone kit which has a one-way valve to decrease the possibility of transmission for the responder. Ensure that the airway is open by performing a “jaw-thrust” maneuver (if previously trained and familiar with this technique), or tilting the head back and lifting the chin up (“head-tilt-chin-lift technique”), regardless of whether rescue breaths are provided.
- Continue to monitor the individual; assess response after 2 minutes. If no response, administer another dose of naloxone and continue to provide rescue breaths as able. Repeat these steps until first responders arrive or the individual begins breathing on their own.
- If the individual is breathing, place them in the recovery position.
- Once the scene has been cleared, thoroughly clean the area in which assistance was provided.
 - See [Environmental Cleaning in Public Facilities](#) and [Prevention](#).
- After the response, thoroughly wash hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and dispose of all items used in the response safely.
- Use new or appropriately cleaned PPE with each poisoning event.

Provision of CPR

Some responders may choose to provide CPR during opioid poisoning response or may be directed to do so by a 911 operator. AHS Infection Prevention and Control states that providing **chest compressions only** is not aerosol-generating; therefore, use of an N95 respirator is not required. If CPR is required:

- Place loose clothing/sheet over the mouth and nose of the patient, as airway source control while awaiting help; and,
- Initiate hand-only chest compressions until you are relieved by individuals who are wearing PPE, including fit-tested N95 respirators.
- Only these relief individuals, wearing N95 respirators, should manage the airway and complete full cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Note: If CPR is being provided with a bag-valve mask, this will be an aerosol-generating medical procedure that will require use of appropriate PPE, which includes a fit-tested respirator, such as N95. For more information on this, visit ahs.ca/covidppe.

Poisoning Prevention when in Self-Isolation

- Tell someone you are using substances and ask them to check on you frequently.
- Leave the door unlocked for easy responder access.
- Have a naloxone kit in the immediate area where you are using.
- Employ safer substance use practices:
 - Disinfect all surfaces that may be touched when using substances, including drug packaging.
 - Use a test dose.
 - Avoid mixing drugs.
 - Be mindful of your health and tolerance.
 - Be familiar with signs and symptoms of poisoning and call 911 if you think you may have taken too much of a substance.

Accessing Support

If you are concerned about being exposed to an infectious disease, including COVID-19, after responding to a suspected opioid poisoning, talk to a health care provider or harm reduction worker.

- [Health Link 811](#) is available 24/7.
- The AHS Harm Reduction Services can be reached via email at harm.reduction@ahs.ca for specific questions or support needs related to accessing harm reduction services or naloxone kits.
- The Alberta Community Council on HIV member organizations operate harm reduction services across Alberta. More information can be found at www.acch.ca

References

Alberta Health Services. (2019). Contact and Droplet Precautions. Retrieved from <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/hi-ipc-contact-and-droplet-precautions-info.pdf>

BC Centre for Disease Control. (2020). People who use substances. Retrieved from <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/clinical-care/people-who-use-substances>

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