

5 Counselling Tips beyond the administration of Take Home Naloxone

In addition to educating on how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose, initiate discussion with patients regarding these important considerations



1

Provide information on the 'Good Samaritan Act'

DOES	DOES NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect people at the scene against charges of simple drug possession (section 4(1) of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act) Protect people at the scene against charges for breaching court conditions where the underlying offense is simple drug possession. This is limited to conditions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parole Pre-trial release Probation orders Conditional sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect people at the scene against charges for more serious offenses, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production, possession for the purpose of trafficking and trafficking of controlled substances Warrants All other crimes besides simple possession Protect individuals at the scene against charges for breaching court conditions where the underlying offense is anything other than simple drug possession

In May 2017, the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act was integrated into Canadian law with the aim of encouraging people to call 911 in the event of an overdose without fear of being charged or arrested. The Act provides some legal protections for individuals who are at the scene of an overdose when police arrive—whether they are the caller, the person needing medical attention, or another person at the scene. The Act does not provide blanket immunity against all charges.

2

Discuss debriefing and preventing distress post naloxone administration

Responding to a life threatening event can be a traumatizing experience, and may have left the patient with residual distress (especially if they had to administer naloxone to someone known to them).

Studies have shown positive outcomes from debriefing a life threatening intervention with friends, family members, or a health care professional. Encourage patients to debrief the events following administering naloxone if they are feeling distress.

Recommend self-care coping mechanisms, reaching out to a counsellor or refer the patient to a family physician for a psychologist referral if the distress is affecting daily functioning.

A practical administration tip for patients is to inject naloxone in the leg rather than the arm. This redirects concentration to the lower half of the body, and minimizes the possibly distressing signs and symptoms of an opioid overdose.

3

Recognize the signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress or anxiety

When patients return to the pharmacy to obtain a new naloxone kit, try to use this opportunity to ask the patient if they would like to discuss their experience with the naloxone administration. Opening up an opportunity to debrief the event may give you a greater insight to patient experience.

The following screening tools are validated resources to utilize in a community pharmacy setting for establishing if the patient is experiencing distress or anxiety as a result of the traumatic event.



[Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale \(HAM-A\)](http://dcf.psychiatry.ufl.edu/files/2011/05/HAMILTON-ANXIETY.pdf)

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[Trauma Screening Questionnaire \(TSQ\)](http://bjp.rcpsych.org/content/181/2/158/full-text.pdf+html)

<http://bjp.rcpsych.org/content/181/2/158/full-text.pdf+html>

Interactions and conversations should begin with compassion, care, and engagement



Always remember that language matters. When distributing naloxone kits, we are often counselling patients, family members, or friends of those who use substances or have substance use disorder.

Stigma often leads to isolation, and can build reluctance in accessing health care services or treatment.

For example, a person with a substance use disorder should not be referred to as an 'addict' or 'drug abuser'. Using non-judgmental language and engaging the patient in their care will help to build an environment of trust, safety, and acceptance.

5

Be familiar with support resources in your community

Collaborate with outreach workers and other health care professionals in your community. The social determinants of health play an important role in providing care for patients and family members of patients who use substances. Community pharmacists are the most accessible place for information, and in counselling on Take Home Naloxone kits it is beneficial to have contacts available for **counselling services, mental health associations and programs, and substance use treatment facilities.**



References

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