

# Naloxone: Saving Lives by Reversing Opioid Overdose

**Naloxone is now available without a prescription. Look for it soon at pharmacies, gas stations, grocery stores, and vending machines around the state.**

Opioid overdose is a serious and growing problem in the United States, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The misuse of opioids, including prescription painkillers and illegal drugs like heroin and fentanyl, can lead to respiratory depression, unconsciousness, and death. In recent years, the problem has only gotten worse.

In the United States, more than 101,750 fatal overdoses occurred in the 12-month period ending in October 2022, primarily driven by synthetic opioids such as illicit fentanyl.<sup>1</sup> There were 6,843 deaths in California linked to opioids in 2021, 5,722 of which were caused by fentanyl. In 2021, there were 224 fentanyl-linked deaths in California among teens, ages 15-19 years old.

Two federal panels of addiction experts unanimously recommended to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that naloxone be made widely available without a prescription, a significant step in the effort to stem skyrocketing drug fatalities. On March 29, 2023, the FDA approved Narcan, 4 milligram (mg) naloxone hydrochloride nasal spray for over-the-counter (OTC), nonprescription use – the first naloxone product approved for use without a prescription.<sup>2</sup>

## **Don't let opioid overdose claim more lives**

Ensure your patients who are on opioids know about the OTC availability of naloxone and where to get it!

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/Communications-Toolkits/Fentanyl-Overdose-Prevention.aspx#:~:text=Based%20on%20preliminary%202021%20data,19%20years%20old%2C%20in%20Californi>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-over-counter-naloxone-nasal-spray>

