



Naloxone Keeps the Circle Strong: Combatting the Opioid Epidemic in Indian Country

The opioid epidemic has received quite a bit of media attention and rightfully so. On average, 250 Americans die every day from an opioid.¹

This opioid crisis has hit Tribal communities particularly hard. In just one year (2019 to 2020), overdose death rates increased by 39% among American Indian and Alaska Native persons.²

While confusion exists on how we can help, there is something we can do!
Here is a two-fold approach we can take to impact this staggering statistic and ensure families are kept together.

1. PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING: THE PERSON

- **Understand opioid overdoses impact all walks of life.** There exists confusion around who experiences an overdose. Unfortunately, opioid overdoses can happen to anyone – elders can be forgetful; children are curious; busy parents are distracted.

Connect with the stories:

- [Jeni shares how she withdrew from her culture because of prescription opioids.](#)
- [Stevi Rae struggled with addiction after a car crash](#) and tells how sharing her story with other Alaska Natives helped.
- **Share resources on what an opioid overdose looks like.** Did you know 40% of overdoses had someone present?³ Family members who recognize an overdose is happening can save their loved one's life. Provide a tip sheet: [Know the Signs. Save a Life.](#)

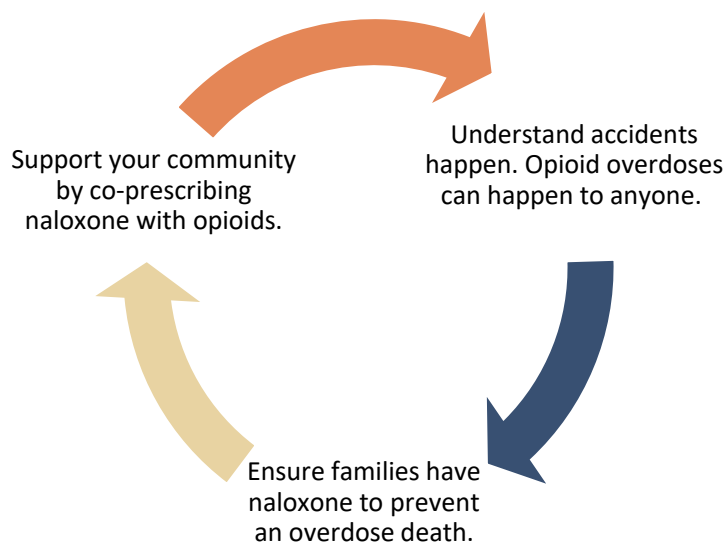
2. PROVIDE ACCESS: THE MEDICATION

Naloxone has become a standard first aid tool across the nation. Naloxone is a medication that reverses an overdose. It can be given at any time, to anyone. It can be administered even if an opioid overdose is only suspected, not confirmed. Studies have shown that community access to naloxone can decrease overdose death rates.⁴

- **Understand naloxone should be a mainstay in a first aid kit.** Inhalers and Epipens can save a life, and so can naloxone. [Lifesaving Naloxone](#)
- **Support pharmacy teams in co-prescribing naloxone with opioids.** Pharmacists have up to 10 times more interactions with patients than primary care providers for pain and chronic condition management.⁵
 - Make it easy for pharmacists to have a naloxone conversation with patients and families with a [conversation starter](#).



- Review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) naloxone mini-module: [Assessment: Do You Know the Risk Factors for an Opioid Overdose?](#)
- Know the facts: [When to Offer Naloxone to Patients](#)
- **Provide community members information and training on naloxone.** Helping the community know what naloxone is and when to use it can save a life.
 - [How to Use Naloxone Nasal Spray](#)
 - [Patients' Frequently Asked Questions](#)
 - [Opioid Overdose Prevention Saves Lives](#)
- **Be in the know of Indian Health Service (IHS) tools, information and resources** provided by IHS National Committee on Heroin Opioids and Pain Efforts (HOPE Committee):
 - [HOPE Committee Naloxone toolkit](#)
 - [IHS Pharmacist Mentors for Co-Prescribing Naloxone](#)



Naloxone keeps the circle strong.

¹<https://www.cdc.gov/injury/budget/opioidoverdosepolicy/TribalCommunities.html>

²<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7129e2.htm#:~:text=From%202019%20to%2020%2C%20overdose,increased%2C%20particularly%20among%20Black%20persons>

³<http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6935a1>

⁴<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29610001/>

⁵<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8096635/>