

PoisonPreventionPress

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Safe Drug Disposal

One of the best ways to combat the prescription drug abuse epidemic is to discard medicines that are no longer needed or that have expired. Use one of the following methods.

- DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) Drug Take-back Days. The next one is scheduled for September 26, 2015.
- Permanent drop-off locations. Many are local police stations. You can find a complete list here: <http://bha.dhmh.maryland.gov/SitePages/Prescription%20Drop-Off%20Collection%20Sites.aspx>
- At home, mix medicines with coffee grounds or kitty litter in a sealed plastic bag. This bag can be thrown in the trash. Scratch out all personal information on the prescription bottle before throwing it in the trash.

Did you know that...

- In Maryland, the number of opioid-related deaths increased by from 729 in 2013 to 887 in 2014.
- In Maryland, intoxication deaths have been increasing among all age groups, but are increasing most rapidly in people 55 years and older.



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Help for Families and Friends—Bystander Naloxone

We are constantly hearing and reading news stories about the heroin and prescription drug abuse epidemic. In 2013, almost 2 million people ages 12 and older, were abusing or were addicted to prescription pain medicines. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there has been an increase in heroin use in men and women, most age groups and all income levels. While it seems that deaths from prescription drug overdose have leveled off, the numbers are still too high. Deaths from heroin continue to rise. Unfortunately there is not a quick fix for the addiction problem. But Marylanders do have a quick fix for saving the lives of their family members and friends. It's called naloxone.

Naloxone is the antidote for drugs in the opioid family. This includes heroin, and pain medicines like oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, fentanyl and methadone. A person who has overdosed on an opioid will fall asleep and breathe too slowly or may stop breathing. Naloxone quickly wakes the patient and restores their breathing. It will reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, but if the symptoms are due to something else, nothing will happen to the patient. Naloxone works within 2-5 minutes but the effects wear off 30-90 minutes after the dose is given. Naloxone can be given by spraying it in the nose or injecting it into a muscle.

In Maryland, the Overdose Response Program (ORP) began in March 2014. It allows for the training of family members and friends of opioid users as well as treatment program staff and police officers. The training includes information about prescription and illicit opioids. It teaches how to recognize the symptoms of an overdose. It also teaches rescue breathing and how to give naloxone. Once the training program is completed, the individual will be able to get naloxone from the trainer or a pharmacy. The training stresses the importance of calling 911 and the poison center after the naloxone is given. Helping someone with naloxone is covered by the Good Samaritan Law in Maryland. This law states that a person who acts to assist another person will not be arrested for certain minor specified crimes. The patient also will not be arrested for the same specified crimes.

Training programs are available in every county in Maryland. A list of ORP Authorized Training Entities is available here: <http://bha.dhmh.maryland.gov/NALOXONE/SitePages/Approved%20Entities.aspx>. Since the beginning of the program, over 8,500 people have been trained, including almost 3,000 police officers. Over 8,000 doses of naloxone have been dispensed. To date, there have been 145 naloxone administrations reported.

If you suspect someone has overdosed on a prescription medicine or an illicit drug, confidential help is available by calling the poison center at 1-800-222-1222. Pharmacists and nurses are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to assist you.



Picture courtesy St. Mary's County Health Dept.