



Naloxone Prescriptions Rising; Overdose-Reversing Drug Slowing the Opioid Crisis

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Prescriptions of Naloxone, an overdose-reversing drug, are soaring and experts are saying it could be a reason why overdose deaths have stopped rising for the first time in nearly three decades. Prescriptions for the lifesaving drug doubled from 2017 to last year, rising from 271,000 to 557,000 according to health officials.

This significant change in Naloxone prescriptions comes in the midst of the deadliest drug overdose epidemic in US history. About 68,000 people died of an overdose last year, according to the preliminary government statistics reported last month. As high as that number remains, it is still a significant drop from the more than 70,000 deaths in 2017.

“One could only hope that this extraordinary increase in prescribing of naloxone is contributing to that stabilization or even decline of the crisis,” said Katherine Keyes, a Columbia University drug abuse expert.

About two-thirds of US overdose deaths involve some kind of opioid. This class of drugs includes heroin, as well as prescription painkillers and Fentanyl. Naloxone is a medication that can reverse opioid overdoses by

restoring breathing and bringing someone back to consciousness. It first went on sale in 1971 as an injection. In 2015, an easier-to-use nasal spray version, Narcan, was approved.

Local, state, and federal officials are encouraging US retail pharmacies to increase Naloxone prescriptions for its lifesaving potential. Cities and states have standing orders that allow pharmacies to give it without a doctor's permission.

Officials are even actively trying to put it into the hands of virtually anyone who might encounter a person overdosing. That includes drug users, police, and even librarians.

Amazingly, the number of Naloxone prescriptions grew more than 430-fold in six years. This is because there were fewer than 1,300 Naloxone prescriptions given in 2012, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We don't think anybody is at the level we'd like to see them," said Dr. Anne Schuchat of the CDC. This means health officials think pharmacies should be giving out even more of these lifesaving drugs.

The CDC report is based on data from IQVIA, a company that tracks health care information. It looked at prescriptions from more than 50,000 retail pharmacies across the country. It included both prescriptions written by doctors and those filled under broader standing orders.

The report only offers a partial picture of what is actually going on. But this is because only about 20 percent of Naloxone was sold to retail pharmacies in 2017, according to an earlier government report. [Click the link to see Saratoga Springs' top rehab placement programs.](#)

According to addiction experts, the findings likely reflect a number of factors. More Naloxone is likely prescribed in places where more people are using opioids and where policies increase access. Researchers found it was more common in cities, and in the South. The report is the CDC's first close look at where most retail dispensing is happening. The agency provided data for about 2,900 of the nation's 3,100 counties and parishes.

Of the 30 counties with the highest rate of Naloxone dispensing in 2018, 13 were in Virginia and five were in Kentucky. The highest Naloxone prescription rate was in Marshall County, Indiana, according to the CDC data.

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid or alcohol addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their

specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

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