

Q&A: What to know about over-the-counter Narcan

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Narcan, an emergency opioid overdose reversal treatment, will soon be available at U.S. pharmacies without a prescription for about \$45. The Food and Drug Administration approved Emergent BioSolutions Inc.'s

spray for over-the-counter use in March. It's the first opioid antidote to be available without a prescription, which will ease access for thousands of patients and their families. Here's what you need to know about it:

Does Narcan work on heroin and fentanyl overdoses?

Narcan [nasal spray](#) is a lifesaving treatment for people who overdose on opioids, including fentanyl and heroin.

How does it work?

When a person is experiencing an [opioid overdose](#), breathing slows and the brain is starved of oxygen. This can lead to cardiac arrest, brain damage and death. Narcan is an opioid antagonist that kickstarts respiratory function, saving lives.

Using Narcan in an individual experiencing an overdose may result in severe opioid withdrawal characterized by an elevated heart rate, nausea and nervousness, according to the FDA. Experts say it's critical to call [emergency responders](#) when administering Narcan.

Who manufactures it?

Emergent, a company better known for developing and manufacturing countermeasures for biological threats like anthrax and smallpox.

How much will it cost?

The over-the-counter spray will cost about \$45 for two doses. Emergent says it will lower the price to \$41 for public interest groups, like [community organizations](#) and first responders.

Narcan's cost is important because most health insurers don't cover it without a prescription. Brand-name, prescription Narcan can cost upwards of \$130, but that's often covered by insurance.

When and where will it be available?

Over-the-counter Narcan will be available in stores as soon as early September, according to a statement from the manufacturer. Walgreens, Rite Aid and CVS will carry the spray, along with Walmart. It will be easy to find at checkout registers and pharmacy counters, and even available for delivery for some customers.

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