

Backgrounder: Opioid Abuse and Naloxone Availability in the Northwest Territories

Background

- Recent overdoses presenting at Stanton Territorial Hospital have highlighted the serious threat fentanyl and other dangerous opioid drugs present in the Northwest Territories.
- Across Canada provinces and territories in collaboration with the Federal government, are working hard to identify and implement solutions that reduce harm and improve the range of options for people who are at risk of overdosing on opioid drugs.

Availability of Naloxone to the Public

- Injectable Naloxone is available without a prescription and distributed by pharmacists, behind the counter.
- In communities that do not have pharmacies, individuals may also obtain naloxone kits through their health center or clinic.

Intra-Nasal Naloxone

- Take Home Intranasal Naloxone is now available free of charge and without a prescription, in limited quantities, in all NWT retail pharmacies. This is an interim measure until we can transition to Take Home Injection Naloxone Kits.
- There is limited availability of intra-nasal naloxone in Canada as it is only being imported from the US by a few suppliers and is not available through our regular distribution systems.
- Health Canada has extensive background information on the supply challenges with intra-nasal naloxone availability on their website at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/prodpharma/activit/announce-annonce/notice-avis-nasal-eng.php>.

Injectable Naloxone

- The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) is planning to make Take Home Injection Naloxone Kits available for distribution through all NWT retail pharmacies, health centres, clinics, hospitals and health cabins.
- Plans are currently underway to ensure health care providers and pharmacists are properly prepared to provide the Take Home Injection Kits, including the necessary teaching, to the public
- Health care providers and pharmacists will teach the public how to draw up and administer Injection Naloxone.
- Distribution of Take Home Injection Naloxone Kits and training of health care providers and pharmacists will occur in a phased approach with further information on this topic to follow in the New Year.

Opioid Task Force

- To further examine the issues surrounding opioid abuse and overdose risks the DHSS and the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA) has established an Opioid Task Force.
- This group consists of members from the authority, department, and outside agencies where appropriate.
- This group will look at many issues from communication and public education to harm reduction and clinical practices with the aim of reducing the risk of opioid dependence and abuse in the Northwest Territories.
- This group has been and will continue to meet regularly.
- The DHSS and NTHSSA also acknowledge the retail pharmacies, the NWT Pharmacy Association and the health care providers for their dedication as they partner with us to continue to address this evolving issue.

NWT Legislation and Naloxone Availability

- A prescription is not required to get injectable naloxone in the NWT.
- The Federal Government (Health Canada) regulates which drugs are approved to be sold in Canada and whether or not a prescription is required.
- The *NWT Pharmacy Act* states:
 - s. 15 - The following National Drug Schedules established by the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities, as amended from time to time, are adopted as drug schedules for the purposes of this Act
 - a) Schedule I;

- b) Schedule II;
- c) Schedule III.

- Schedule II and III drugs do not require a prescription.
- The National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) approved Naloxone injectable for Schedule II on June 6, 2016 <http://napra.ca/pages/Schedules/Search.aspx>
- Naloxone spray has been approved for use in Canada by the Federal Minister of Health but is not yet on the NAPRA schedules.

If you would like this information in another official language, contact us at 1-866-846-8601.
Si vous voulez ces renseignements dans une autre langue officielle, communiquez avec nous au
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