



Mississippi State Department of Health
Mississippi Board of Pharmacy

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NEWS RELEASE
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Drug to Reverse Effects of Opioid Overdose Now Available From Mississippi Pharmacists

JACKSON, Miss. – In a continued effort to curb the opioid epidemic in Mississippi, a drug proven to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose is now available by request directly from a pharmacist at all Mississippi pharmacies.

Through a standing order issued by Mississippi State Health Officer Dr. Mary Currier, pharmacists are now permitted to dispense by request the narcotic blocker naloxone. A prescription from a doctor or other medical practitioner is not required.

In an overdose, this drug blocks the brain's opioid receptors and restores normal breathing in people who have overdosed on fentanyl, heroin, or prescription opioid painkillers. Naloxone's temporary blocking effect allows time for professional medical attention to be sought.

"Expansion of the availability and use of this drug could greatly reduce drug overdose deaths and save lives," said Dr. Currier. "It's important that Mississippians – any family member, friend or other person in a position to help someone suffering from an opioid overdose – are aware of the availability of this drug and know how to administer it if the need arises."

Mississippi has seen a significant increase in the number of opioid overdose deaths in the last several years, with 172 in 2016 compared with 76 in 2011, an increase of more than 125 percent. In that same five year time span, more than 700 opioid overdose deaths were reported in Mississippi.

You should know how to use naloxone and have it within reach if you are a patient currently taking high doses of opioids prescribed for pain, someone misusing prescription opioids, someone who uses illicit opioids such as heroin or fentanyl, or if you live with or are often in the presence of people with an opioid use disorder.

Naloxone has no effect on someone not using opioid drugs.

"We applaud Dr. Currier's wisdom in offering another tool in our battle against opioid abuse and overdose deaths," said Frank Gammill, executive director of the Mississippi Board of Pharmacy. "I am confident this will save lives. I challenge all pharmacies in Mississippi to participate in this standing order and offer this life-saving medication to their communities."

Gammill said the Board of Pharmacy will continue in its effort to educate pharmacists and the public about naloxone.

"My staff will be immediately reaching out to pharmacists across the state to inform them of the details of this standing order," he said.

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