NALOXONE SAVES LIVES
Naloxone can quickly restore normal breathing and save the life of a person who is overdosing on opioids. In 2015, over 33,000 people died from an overdose on opioid drugs, including prescription pain relievers, heroin, and fentanyl. 

Friends, family, and other bystanders can save lives with naloxone. Naloxone distribution programs give naloxone kits to opioid users, their friends and families, and others who may find themselves in a position to save the life of someone at risk of an opioid overdose.

- A naloxone distribution program in Massachusetts reduced opioid overdose deaths by an estimated 11 percent in the nineteen communities that implemented it without increasing opioid use.
- From 1996 to 2014, at least 26,500 opioid overdoses in the U.S. were reversed by laypersons using naloxone.

HOW DOES NALOXONE WORK?
Naloxone is an opioid receptor antagonist meaning it binds to opioid receptors and reverses or blocks the effects of other opioids. Giving naloxone immediately reverses the effects of opioid drugs, restoring normal respiration. It can be administered by injection or through a nasal spray.

IS NALOXONE SAFE?
Yes. There is no evidence of significant adverse reactions to naloxone. 

The risk that someone overdosing on opioids will have a serious adverse reaction to naloxone is far less than their risk of dying from overdose. Naloxone only works if a person has opioids in their system; the medication has no effect if opioids are absent.
GOOD SAMARITAN LAWS FOR NALOXONE
Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia provide legal immunity for friends, family, and other bystanders, or “Good Samaritans,” who seek medical aid for someone experiencing an opioid overdose.14, 15

AFTER NALOXONE IS GIVEN
BYSTANDERS: CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY
It is important to call emergency responders right away. Naloxone is only active in the body for 30 to 90 minutes and its effects could wear off before those of the opioids, causing the user to stop breathing again.

CLINICANS: SCREEN FOR OPIOID USE DISORDER
An overdose reversal is a critical opportunity to identify people with opioid use disorder and engage them in treatment.
• Patients should be assessed for opioid use disorder using a validated tool, such as NIDA’s Recognizing Opioid Abuse table.
• Those with a positive assessment should be engaged in treatment, including FDA-approved medications, when appropriate.
• Treatment plans, including opioid pain reliever dose, should be reassessed for patients who are prescribed opioids for pain. See the CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain.

WHERE CAN I GET NALOXONE?
Naloxone can be purchased in many pharmacies, in many states, without bringing in a prescription. The majority of states allow prescribing and dispensing of naloxone to family members and friends in addition to people receiving prescription opioids for pain or with opioid use disorder.14 Law enforcement, emergency medical services, and community-based naloxone distribution programs can apply to be a Qualified Purchaser or work with their state or local health department to order naloxone. To find naloxone in your area, go to the Naloxone Finder.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?
If you or someone you care about has an opioid use disorder:
• Ask your health care provider or pharmacist about naloxone
• View NIDA’s naloxone web page

References