Surgeon General Urges Americans to Keep Naloxone on Hand

The drug can save the lives of people overdosing on opioids.

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Last week, Surgeon General Jerome M. Adams, MD, issued a national advisory urging Americans to start carrying naloxone, a drug that can save the lives of people overdosing on opioids, The New York Times reports.

With the issuance of the first public health advisory by a surgeon general since 2005, Adams emphasized the severity of the opioid crisis, which has killed more than 250,000 Americans over the past decade. Adams said making naloxone (commonly known by its brand name, Narcan) is critical to addressing the record number of heroin- and prescription painkiller–related deaths across the country.

Naloxone is typically administered as a nasal mist or injection. The drug reverses the effects of an overdose and can resuscitate people who might otherwise die. Many police officers and emergency health workers already carry the drug — but now everyday Americans who may come into contact with opioid users are being advised to consider carrying it as well.

In most states, naloxone is available at pharmacies without a prescription, and most insurance plans cover the drug. Naloxone can also be obtained for free or at low cost through many public or community health clinics.

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