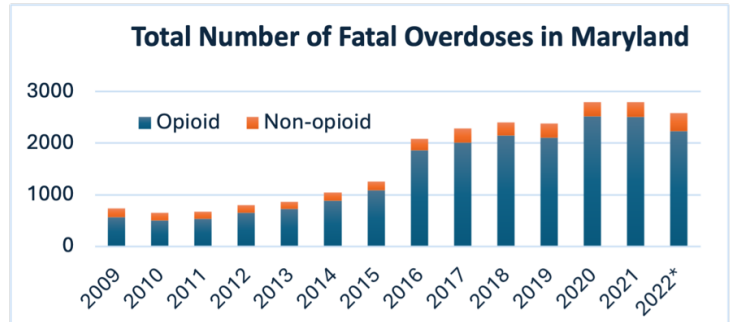


Since 2009, over 20,000 people have died in Maryland due to opioid-related overdoses.¹

Starting in 2017, most of these deaths involved fentanyl.



Source: Maryland Department of Health, Vital Statistics Administration

What is naloxone (Narcan)?

A life-saving medication that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose.² It can restore breathing within 2 to 3 minutes when a person's respirations have slowed or stopped. Naloxone is an opioid antagonist. The primary adverse effect of any opioid antagonist is acute withdrawal in patients who have used opioids.

What is nalmefene (Opvee)?

A long-acting, high potency opioid antagonist that was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration in May 2023.³ Given the increased length of action of nalmefene, repeat administration during an overdose may not be necessary but there is no evidence that the length of medical monitoring required would be decreased. Risk of prolonged opioid withdrawal is increased with this medication. There is limited research surrounding the use of nalmefene in community-based settings and with synthetic opioids such as fentanyl. Given this, the American College of Medical Toxicologists and the American Association of Clinical Toxicologists have released a position statement against the utilization of nalmefene as a first line treatment for overdose reversal at this time.⁴

What are the concerns?

Recent data suggest that there is **no benefit** of nalmefene or 8 mg naloxone over the 4 mg naloxone formulation, and there are **more risks**, including a significantly higher likelihood of opioid withdrawal signs and symptoms, including vomiting.⁵ These data align with other reports.⁶

- ❖ There are also concerns that these effects could be worse for patients using fentanyl, although data are currently lacking on whether this is the case.
- ❖ Furthermore, the wholesale cost of nalmefene is significantly greater than that of naloxone, causing an increased burden on state resources for no additional clinical benefit.
- ❖ Given the present data, the current most evidence-based, cost-effective medication for opioid overdose reversal is 4 mg naloxone.

For additional support, Maryland providers contact: 855-337-MACS | www.marylandmacs.org

References

1. Maryland Vital Statistics. *Unintentional Drug- and Alcohol-Related Intoxication Deaths in Maryland, 2022: Preliminary 2022 Data.*; 2023.
2. Lifesaving Naloxone. Accessed February 18, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/naloxone/index.html>
3. Harris E. FDA Approves Nalmefene, a Longer-Lasting Opioid Reversal Nasal Spray. *JAMA*. 2023;329(23):2012-2012. doi:10.1001/JAMA.2023.9608
4. Stolbach AI, Mazer-Amirshahi ME, Nelson LS, Cole JB. American College of Medical Toxicology and the American Academy of Clinical Toxicology position statement: nalmefene should not replace naloxone as the primary opioid antidote at this time. *Clin Toxicol*. Published online 2023. doi:10.1080/15563650.2023.2283391
5. Payne ER, Stancliff S, Rowe K, Christie JA, Dailey MW. Comparison of Administration of 8-Milligram and 4-Milligram Intranasal Naloxone by Law Enforcement During Response to Suspected Opioid Overdose — New York, March 2022–August 2023. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | MMWR*. 2024;73(5). Accessed February 18, 2024. [https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-](https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-18)
6. Carpenter J, Murray BP, Atti S, Moran TP, Yancey A, Morgan B. Naloxone Dosing After Opioid Overdose in the Era of Illicitly Manufactured Fentanyl. *Journal of Medical Toxicology*. 2020;16(1):41. doi:10.1007/S13181-019-00735-W