



For Immediate Release

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Contact: Dustin Lyda

Partnership HealthPlan of California
(866) 828-2301 | press@partnershiphp.org

Your Partner in Health: **The Trouble with Opioids and the Importance of Naloxone**

By Jeffrey DeVido, M.D.

In 2021, over half of drug overdose deaths in the United States involved an opioid. Opioids are a class of medications that are prescribed to relieve moderate to severe pain. Prescription opioids have risks of leading to misuse, substance use disorder (addiction), or overdoses. Overdoses can be fatal because opioids that are taken in large amounts can cause a person to lose awareness, and their breathing may slow or stop altogether. Any opioid use outside of a doctor's direct care is dangerous.

Fentanyl is an extremely potent opioid that is 100 times stronger than morphine. Relative to morphine and most other opioids, it takes very little fentanyl to cause someone to stop breathing and die. Fentanyl is made synthetically (in a lab), and is increasingly being distributed throughout the United States in the illicit drug supply. Other illicit drugs available on the street, such as methamphetamine and cocaine, are being mixed with fentanyl. This means that some people may get exposed to fentanyl without even knowing it, increasing the risk of death by inadvertent fentanyl overdose.

The widespread availability of fentanyl makes it crucial that all communities are educated about the risks of opioid overdoses and life-saving medication that can reverse overdoses. Naloxone, commonly known as Narcan, is an easy-to-administer medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of opioid overdose. Naloxone is available in nasal spray and muscle injection forms. People in all communities can carry naloxone to help prevent an overdose death. It is especially recommended to carry naloxone if you or someone you know is at risk for opioid overdose. The sooner that an overdosing individual is given naloxone, the better the chances are that they will survive.

Learn more about naloxone on the [Centers for Disease Control website](#). To learn where you can find naloxone available in your community, visit:

- The [California Department of Public Health website](#).
- The [NextDistro website](#). NextDistro is a non-profit organization dedicated to harm reduction.
- The [National Harm Reduction Coalition website](#). This coalition began in 1993 from a grassroots group of activists during the AIDS epidemic.

If you or someone you know is struggling with an opioid addiction, you are not alone. For urgent mental health support and assistance in dealing with substance use disorder, dial 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Dr. Jeffrey DeVido is the behavioral health clinical director at Partnership HealthPlan of California.

About Partnership HealthPlan of California: Partnership is a community-based, safety-net health care organization that contracts with the state to administer Medi-Cal benefits. Partnership provides quality care to approximately 900,000 Medi-Cal members. Starting in Solano County in 1994, Partnership now serves 24 Northern California counties – Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Yolo, and Yuba. Learn more about Partnership at [PartnershipHP.org](#).

About *Your Partner in Health*: Partnership is sharing quarterly articles on important health topics with media outlets in our service area to help our members and communities be healthy.