

## OTC Naloxone Now Available at CVS Pharmacies in NJ!!!

CVS Pharmacies said more of its stores will carry an over-the-counter drug to treat heroin overdose. The medication, Naloxone, will now be available without a prescription at CVS stores in 12 additional states. Those states include Arkansas, California, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, New Jersey, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Wisconsin. Naloxone is already available over the counter at CVS stores in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

"Over 44,000 people die from accidental drug overdoses every year in the United States and most of those deaths are from opioids, including controlled substance pain medication and illegal drugs such as heroin," Tom Davis, vice president of pharmacy professional practices at CVS, said in a statement. "Naloxone is a safe and effective antidote to opioid overdoses and by providing access to this medication in our pharmacies without a prescription in more states, we can help save lives."

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Naloxone works as an opioid antagonist against heroin - a powerful opiate. When a person overdoses on heroin, the drug binds to too many opioid receptors in the brain; this causes the brain to stop sending signals that regulate a person's heartbeat and breathing. If Naloxone is injected during an overdose, it knocks the opioids off the brain's receptors, allowing the person to breath normally again. The medication can be administered either by needle or nasal spray.

Despite its proven effectiveness, Naloxone does come with its share of controversy. Critics argue that making the medication easily available at pharmacies will motivate heroin users to do more of the drug. The National Institutes of Health says that isn't the case, and that two areas where Naloxone was made readily available actually saw a reduction in self-reported drug use. Overall, the NIH argues that the benefits of selling Naloxone outweigh the potential downsides. "It is unethical to allow a narrow focus on the harms of drug use to overshadow an opportunity to save human lives," the NIH wrote.

Currently, Naloxone is available at all CVS pharmacies with a prescription. Making it over the counter ensures faster delivery of the medication. Davis hopes to make Naloxone available without a prescription in even more states, though a spokesperson for CVS said states must set up their own programs first to allow it.

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