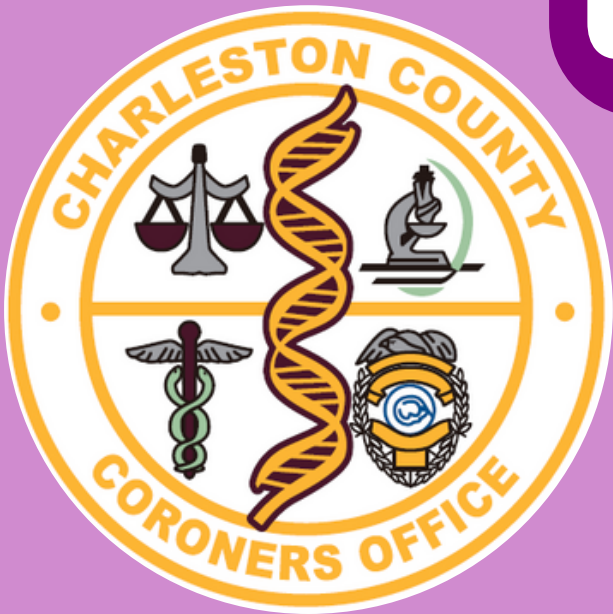




Combating the Opioid Crisis



What Can You Do to Help and Why it Matters



Addiction isn't a Choice

It is important to understand that opioid use disorder is a condition that can affect individuals from all walks of life, regardless of their gender, race, or socioeconomic status. This addiction to opioids can be a result of various factors and can have devastating consequences on both physical and mental health.



It is a Chronic Disease

Chronic disease is a condition that can last for a long time or have recurring symptoms. When someone uses opioids, it causes lasting changes to their brain and increases the likelihood of future opioid use. Although opioid use disorder (OUD) is a chronic condition, it can be effectively managed and treated.

What is Stigma?

Stigma is a form of disapproval or judgment aimed at a specific behavior, circumstance, or group. It often leads to stereotypes, blame, and discrimination, which can result in social exclusion, harassment, and violence. This behavior negatively impacts the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of those affected by it.

What causes OUD Stigma?

The stigma around opioid addiction is a result of widespread but false beliefs.



The truth is:



Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) is a chronic medical condition that cannot be resolved simply by willpower or a desire to quit. It requires proper treatment and support, just like any other disease.

Stigma and shame often discourage those with OUD from seeking help. Alternatively, empathy and understanding can encourage them to seek appropriate care.

Addiction is not a result of moral weakness or character flaws; it can happen to anyone.

Harmful Effects of Stigma

The stigma surrounding opioid use can cause individuals to feel fearful, ashamed, rejected, hopeless, or angry. This can make seeking or sticking with treatment significantly more difficult. It's crucial to understand that not treating OUD increases the risk of recurrent opioid use, overdose, or death. Therefore, addressing this issue and educating others to eliminate the stigma is paramount in supporting the success of those struggling with addiction.

What Can YOU do to Help End Stigma?

Recognize that OUD is a chronic health condition that requires ongoing treatment and management, as well as support. Recovery is a process that is unique for each person.

It's important to avoid using shame-based language like "junkie" or "addict." These are hurtful and perpetuate stigma. Instead, use "a person who uses drugs"; this humanizes and shows respect to individuals who are struggling with substance use.



Understand that relapse or recurrence can happen to anyone; it is hard to grapple with, regardless of character or moral strength.



If you know someone who is struggling with opioid addiction, show them kindness, listen, and offer your support, and don't forget to take care of yourself, too!

How to Identify an Overdose?



Symptoms of an Overdose

- Pale or clammy to the touch
- Limp body
- Have blue, purple, or grayish fingernails, lips, or skin
- Be unable to speak or awaken
- Making a distinct snore or gurgling sound
- have slowed or stopped breathing
- have a slow or stopped heartbeat



**An Overdose is a medical emergency!
Stay with the individual and call 911!**

What is Naloxone?

Naloxone, also known as Narcan, is a medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. Known as an opioid antagonist, the Naloxone has a higher affinity to bond to the Opioid Receptors in the brain knocking off and preventing opioids from binding to them which reverses the effects of an overdose.

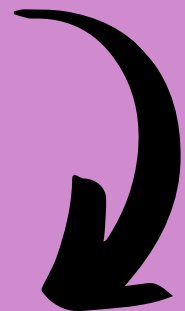


Where can you get Naloxone?

- There are many organizations that are community distributors and can freely provide Naloxone to their communities free of cost.



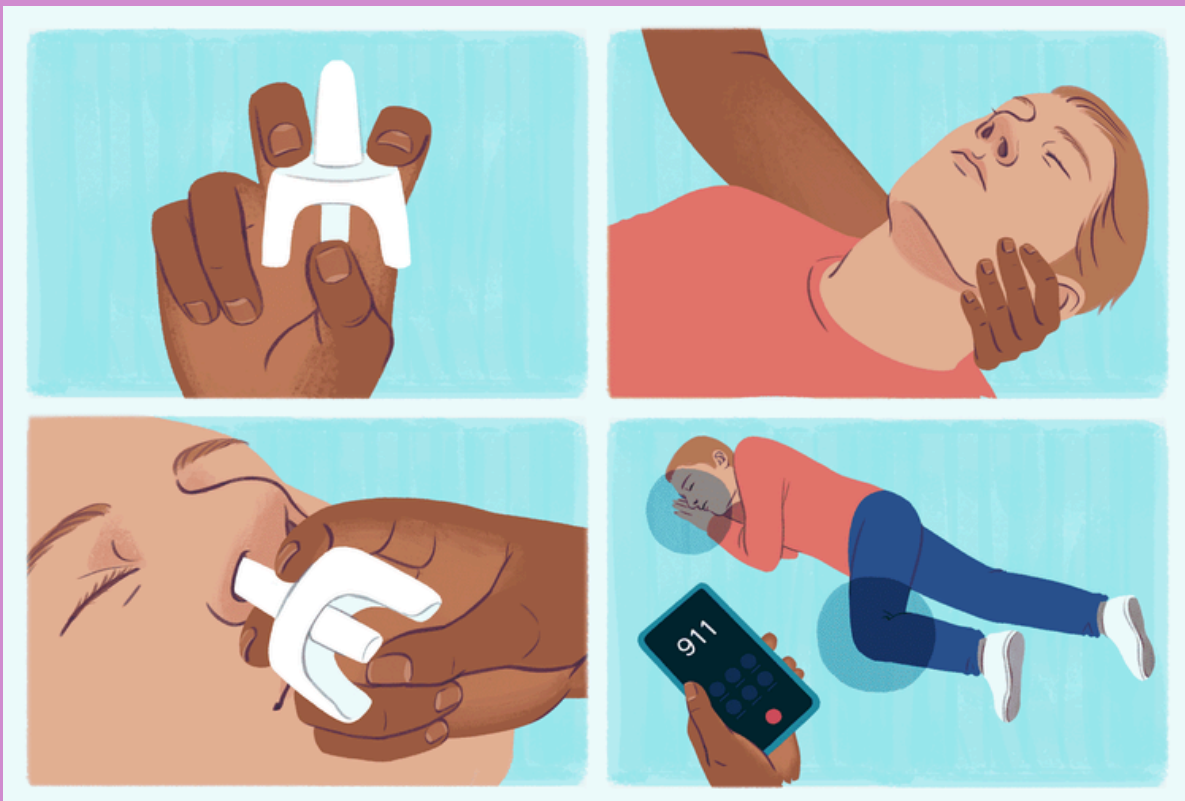
To view a list of Community Distributors use this link to view a comprehensive list:



<http://naloxonesavessc.org/community-distributors/>

How to Administer Naloxone

1. Do not test spray or prime the dose, the person needs the full dose!
2. Insert the tip of the nozzle into one nostril and push the plunger firmly to administer the dose.
3. Call 911 and stay with the person!
4. Administer rescue breathing if applicable.
5. If there are no changes, administer another dose, you cannot overdose on Naloxone and some people require multiple doses to come out of their overdose.



The Risks of Fentanyl & Mixed Drugs

- Fentanyl is a powerful painkiller often prescribed in controlled doses for individuals dealing with severe pain.
- Like other opioids, fentanyl is highly addictive.
- Fentanyl is 50X stronger than heroin, it affects a person very quickly and strongly. Making it very easy to overdose on.

Fentanyl is common in illicit drugs found on the street. It is added to drugs like heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine, etc.



The Risks of Benzos

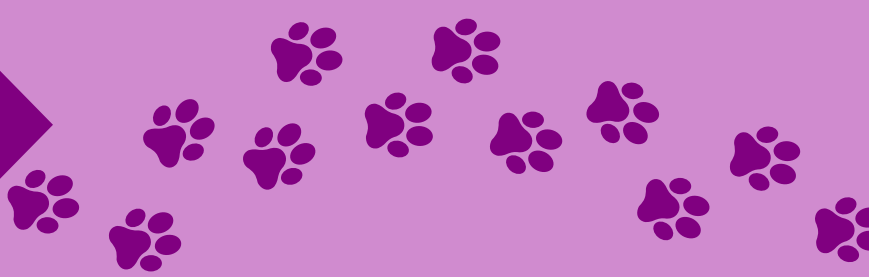
Benzodiazepines are prescription drugs used for anxiety, insomnia, seizures, muscle disorders, and alcohol withdrawal. They are safe when used correctly but are highly addictive and potentially deadly if misused. Common benzos are Valium, Ativan, and Xanax.

Mixing benzodiazepines with alcohol or opioids is particularly dangerous, as all three depress heart rate and breathing, increasing the risk of death in combination. Withdrawal symptoms can be severe, risking intense abdominal pain, psychosis, and life-threatening seizures, so individuals should not abruptly stop taking them. A doctor should manage gradual reduction of Benzo use.

Counterfeit benzodiazepines, like Bromazolam, may contain lethal substances such as fentanyl, raising the risk of fatal overdose.



Xylazine



Xylazine is a drug intended for use in animals. it is a sedative and a pain reliever.

More and more, Xylazine is being found mixed into drugs found on the street, this being why many people don't realize they are taking it.

Xylazine slows down the central nervous system and is added to illicit drugs due to its cheap availability and to intensify the effect of the drug. It is most commonly mixed with Fentanyl which greatly increases the risk of death due to an overdose.

Since Fentanyl and Xylazine are commonly found in combination it is good to administer naloxone and like always call 911.

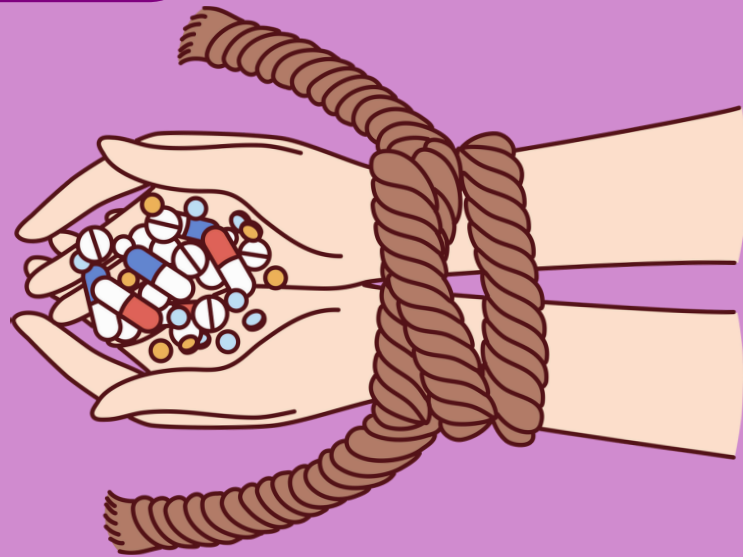


Opioid misuse and addiction are big problems for many people. When it comes to using opioids, people who experience stigma are less likely to seek out treatment. Part of ending the Opioid Crisis has to include public awareness, education, advocacy, and harm reduction. To learn more visit the links below

- www.harmreduction.org
- www.cdc.gov/opioids
- www.wakeupcarolina.org
- <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/stigma-discrimination>
- <https://narcan.com/opioid-education>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/opioids/overdose-prevention/index.htm>



Charleston County Drug Treatment Services



- The Charleston Center
- WakeUp Carolina
- MUSC Center for Drug and Alcohol Programs
- Center for Behavioral Health
- Latana Recovery Rehab
- Barrier Islands Psychiatry & Addiction Medicine
- Roper St Francis Greer Transitions Clinic
- Recovery Unplugged
- Waypoint Recovery Center Outpatient Treatment
- South Carolina STRONG
- Charleston Suboxone Clinic

