



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®  
SOCIÉTÉ DE SAUVETAGE

*The Lifeguarding Experts*  
*Les experts en surveillance aquatique*

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## Information Bulletin for Canadian Swimming Pools and Waterfronts

### Administration of Naloxone by Lifeguards

#### Information:

Since 2016, thousands of Canadians have died as a result of opioid-related overdoses. Opioids are psychoactive substances, affecting the mind, mood and mental processes of an opioid user. Opioids can also induce euphoria, or the feeling of being “high”, creating the potential for them to be used improperly (1).

Overdoses can occur from improper use of medically prescribed opioids as well as from illegally produced, sold, or shared opioids (1). Opioids such as fentanyl and carfentanil are particularly dangerous as they can be fatal in very small amounts and are being mixed with, or disguised and sold as, street drugs such as heroin, cocaine and counterfeit oxycodone (2).

Naloxone has successfully reversed thousands of opioid overdoses across Canada and is used by first responders such as paramedics and police. Take-home kits are available to individuals at risk of an overdose or to individuals who are likely to encounter someone experiencing an overdose. Naloxone is safe for use on all ages and only affects individuals with opioids in their system (2).

#### Definitions

**Aquatic Facility:** any swimming pool, wading pool, waterpark, waterfront, or similar location that is used for aquatic activities such as swimming, wading, diving or aquatic sports.

**Naloxone:** a fast-acting drug used to temporarily reverse the effects of opioid overdoses (2).

**Opioids:** are drugs that are used primarily to treat pain and can produce a feeling of euphoria. Opioids can be prescribed (codeine, fentanyl, morphine, oxycodone, hydromorphone, medical heroin) or illegally produced (heroin, fentanyl).

## Implementation

Opioid overdoses can occur in both private and public locations, including aquatic facilities. Often lifeguards are designated by their employer as the first aid provider for the facility, and, as such, lifeguards could realistically find themselves responding to an individual suffering from an opioid overdose.

National Lifeguards are trained to perform primary care interventions such as CPR and the use of an AED; however, they are not trained in the use of Naloxone. If an employer determines that lifeguards need to be able to respond to drug overdoses, the employer should ensure the lifeguards are provided with specialized training as approved by the regional health authority and/or the provincial/territorial Occupational Health and Safety division.

## References

- (1) Government of Canada - GOC (2019). *Opioids – What are they? (fact sheet)* from Health Canada. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/problematic-prescription-drug-use/opioids.html>
- (2) Government of Canada - GOC (2019). *Problematic Substance Abuse – Opioids* from Health Canada. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/problematic-prescription-drug-use/opioids.html>

## Approval

- Approved by the Lifesaving Society Canada Board of Directors on 21 April 2020.

## Disclaimer

Lifesaving Society Canada's National Safety Standards are developed using Coroners' recommendations, the latest evidence-based research, and reflect the aquatics industry's best practices at the time the publication was approved.

The purpose of these standards is to encourage swimming pool, waterpark and waterfront owners, managers, operators and regulators to adopt these standards, in order to prevent drownings in aquatic environments.

Lifesaving Society Canada's National Safety Standards do not replace or supersede local, provincial/territorial or federal legislation or regulations, but they are considered the standard to which aquatic facility operators should work towards, in order to enhance safety within their operations and to prevent drowning.