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Know Someone Who Uses Opiates? SLO Coalition Wants You to Carry Naloxone *Overdose Antidote Is Widely Available, Free or Inexpensive in San Luis Obispo County*

San Luis Obispo — As opioid overdose deaths continue nationally and in San Luis Obispo County, the SLO Opioid Safety Coalition has a clear request for people who use opioids or know someone who does: carry naloxone, and be ready to use it. Naloxone is a safe, effective medication that can reverse an opioid overdose. It is available at little or no cost across San Luis Obispo County and can be given by people who do not have medical training.

"If you or someone you care about is at risk of an overdose, please carry naloxone," said Katie Grainger, Naloxone Action Team Champion for the SLO Opioid Safety Coalition and Lead Overdose Prevention Educator with the County of San Luis Obispo Health Agency. "It's like having a fire extinguisher at the house. You may not need it, but it's better to have it in case of an emergency."

Anyone who uses opioids is at risk of overdose, whether the opioid is a medication prescribed by a doctor to treat pain (like Vicodin or Oxycontin) or an illicit drug such as heroin. While certain factors—such as combining opioids with other medications or alcohol, or using opioids after a period of not using them—can increase the risk of an overdose, that risk is ever-present. Research shows that people who use opioids consistently underestimate their risk.

"Many of our neighbors, parents, children, friends and loved ones here in SLO County have naloxone to thank for being alive today," said Grainger. "These are valuable members of our community who got a second chance, and we care about their survival and well-being."

Naloxone (also known by its brand name Narcan) is non-addictive and has virtually no side effects. It has no potential for abuse as it does not produce any high effect, and is not a controlled substance. An opioid overdose causes the respiratory system to fail, preventing oxygen from getting to the brain. Naloxone, an opioid antagonist, temporarily removes the opioids from the opioid receptors, allowing the person to breathe again. It has been FDA-approved since 1971, but was only used by medical professionals until recent legislation ([AB 1535](#) and [AB 635](#) in California) made it available to be given by laypeople. In addition, [AB 472](#) encourages people to call 911 in the event of an overdose and clarifies that it is not considered a crime to be under the influence if seeking medical assistance for an overdose victim.

"A common criticism that I hear about naloxone is that it enables people to relapse or continue their addiction," said Grainger. "In reality, the only thing naloxone enables is breathing. Research shows again and again that it has no impact on relapse or addiction rates. What it does is give people a chance at recovery by keeping them alive until they get it right."

Naloxone is available at no cost or low cost at locations across San Luis Obispo County, including confidential or anonymous settings. It is free with Medi-Cal and is covered fully or in part by most insurance. It is available for people who use opioids for any reason and for those who know someone who does. Naloxone is available as an injection or a nasal spray. Options to obtain naloxone include:

With a prescription

- **Your regular healthcare provider** can write a prescription for naloxone. The prescription can be filled at any CVS or Rite Aid Pharmacy in SLO County.
- **County of San Luis Obispo Drug and Alcohol Services** prescribes naloxone and provides education sessions on when and how to use it. Call (805) 781-4756 to learn more.

Without a prescription

- **SLO Bangers Syringe Exchange** provides naloxone without a prescription, at no cost and in a confidential setting. Call (805) 458-0123 to learn more, or stop by Wednesdays from 5:30-7:30 at 2191 Johnson Ave.
- **Certain pharmacies** provide naloxone from the pharmacist without a prescription:
 - CVS SLO – 11990 Los Osos Valley Road
 - CVS Arroyo Grande – 1435 E. Grand Avenue
 - CVS Nipomo – 610 W Tefft Street
 - CVS Paso Robles – 187 Niblick Road
 - Cayucos Pharmacy – 72 S Ocean Avenue
 - En Soleil Pharmacy in Atascadero – 5735 El Camino Real

"Being ready for an emergency doesn't mean you expect the worst," said Grainger. "It just means you care. And for those who are in recovery or struggling with addiction, or have loved ones who are—it's important to know that people care, and you are not alone."

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The SLO County Opioid Safety Coalition was established in January 2016 to reduce prescription drug misuse and abuse. The initiative is driven by a diverse coalition of community members, including law enforcement, physicians, pharmacists, treatment professionals, Public Health Department, Behavioral Health Department, educators and others who are working to collaboratively address the problem in San Luis Obispo County. Learn more and get involved at www.opioidsafetyslo.org.



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Survivor Story: Ryan



I was an IV drug user for ten years. So how did I overdose? Well, I was down at Pirate's Cove with my friend, sitting in the car, overlooking the beach. I had just gotten out of treatment a few days before. I mixed up a shot and realized it was much larger than I had wanted, a full syringe at 100cc's. I told myself to only use about half and then pull the syringe out, because I knew my tolerance had reduced when I had that period of abstinence in treatment. But I didn't. I accidentally did the full amount and overdosed.

My friend, who was asleep, woke up, thank God, and when she turned to look at me, she said my face and body were completely blue. I don't know how long I had been out. She yelled for help and tried to pull me out of the car. She gave me a few quick rescue breaths, realized I was not coming to, and then dragged me back into the car and drove as quickly as she could to Arroyo Grande Hospital.

When I woke up in the hospital, I had no idea where I was or who I was. It took about fifteen minutes after they administered the naloxone until I started to get some of my brain function back. And it's all back now.

As soon as I remember opening my eyes, I heard a nurse say, "He's awake," and I looked and saw my friend, terrified, by the end of my hospital bed. I don't remember any side effects except having some withdrawal.

Naloxone gave me another chance at life. Now I'm in the Adult Recovery Court program, I'm doing well, working two jobs, have a car, and I'm maintaining sobriety. I recently ran a 5K and I exercise every day as a way to stay positive, focused, and strong in my recovery. A lot of people I know overdosed in their teens and twenties, but drug use shouldn't be a death sentence. I'm just grateful for this chance, and happy with how my life is going now.

I tell my story to anyone who will listen because I want people to know that second chances are real. If my friend hadn't gotten me to the hospital so quickly to get naloxone, I might not be here. Now naloxone is something you can get outside the hospital—you can have it on hand like a first-aid kit to help someone make it until they get medical treatment. I want everyone to know they can get naloxone and keep it with them just in case. It can give someone a second chance like I had.



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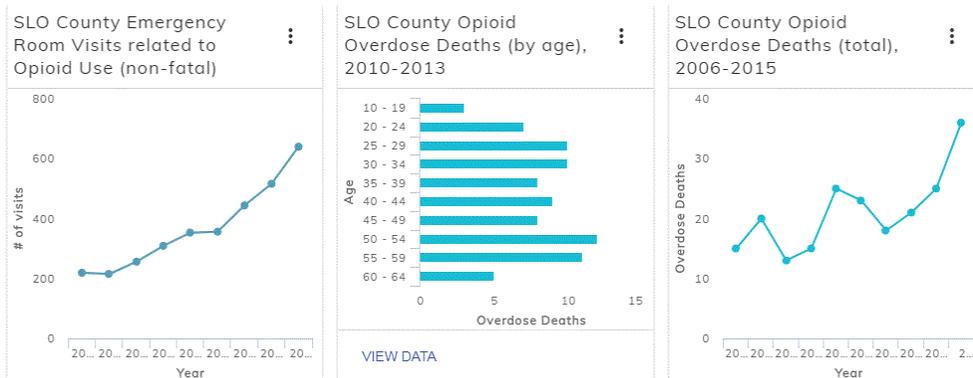
Fact Sheet: Opioid Epidemic in San Luis Obispo County

Across the nation: Drug overdose is the **leading cause of accidental death** in the U.S., surpassing even car collisions. This trend is driven largely by opioids. Opioid overdose claimed more lives in 2015 than HIV/AIDS at the height of the epidemic in 1995.

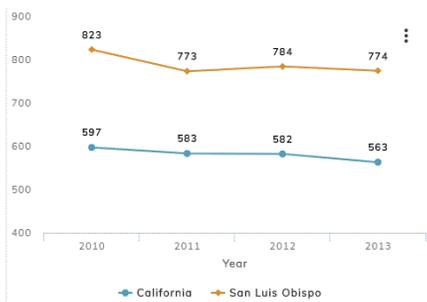
In California: Overdoses among young people (age 12-25) have **nearly tripled** in the past ten years.

In San Luis Obispo County:

- Opioid-related **overdose deaths more than doubled** from 15 in 2006 to 36 in 2015, affecting community members of all ages. Deaths related to opioids have been on the rise in SLO County, as have emergency room visits related to opioids use¹:



- In SLO County, **16 percent of 11th graders** reported having used prescription opioids, tranquilizers, or sedatives recreationally at least once in their lifetime.²
- For every 1,000 residents in SLO County, 774 prescriptions for an opioid** medication were written in 2013. From 2010-2013, San Luis Obispo County had a higher number of prescriptions per 1,000 residents than the state average. Some hopeful news: in 2016, opioid prescriptions in SLO County decreased for the first time since 2013. 226,145 prescriptions were written for opioids in 2016 in SLO County, down from 242,260 in 2015.³



¹ California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development; County of San Luis Obispo Coroner's Office

² California Healthy Kids Survey, 2015-16: Main Report. San Francisco: WestEd Health & Human Development Program for the California Department of Education.

³ Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System



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At a Glance: Is It an Opioid?

Opioids are drugs derived from the opium poppy or synthetic versions of it. Opioids include illicit drugs such as heroin and prescription drugs known by many different brand names. Some common opioids include:

Generic name

- Buprenorphine
- Codeine
- Fentanyl
- Hydrocodone
- Hydromorphone
- Meperidine
- Methadone
- Morphine
- Oxycodone
- Oxymorphone
- Pentazocine
- Propoxyphene
- Tramadol

Brand name

- Actiq
- Avinza
- Combunox
- Darvocet
- Darvon
- Demerol
- Dilaudid
- Duragesic
- Embeda
- Fentora
- Kadian
- Lorcet
- Lortab
- Onsolis
- Opana
- OxyContin
- Palladone
- Percocet
- Percodan
- MS Contin
- Norco
- Suboxone
- Subutex
- Talwin
- Tylenol-3
- Tylox
- Ultracet
- Ultram
- Vicodin



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Interview Availability

- **Ryan, overdose survivor**—available to discuss his personal experience with opiate overdose and recovery, and his perspective on naloxone.
- **Katie Grainger, Naloxone Action Team Champion for the SLO Opioid Safety Coalition** and Lead Overdose Prevention Educator with the County of San Luis Obispo Health Agency—available to discuss local overdose prevention efforts, offer personal and professional perspective on impact of opioid epidemic in SLO County, and provide detail about how to get naloxone.
- **Katie Dolezal, Nurse Practitioner**, County of San Luis Obispo Drug and Alcohol Services, and SLO Opioid Safety Coalition member—available to share a medical perspective on how naloxone works, what happens to the body during an overdose, and what it means for medical teams when someone in the general public administers naloxone; also available to share information about detox and medication-assisted treatment available in SLO County.

For more information, to arrange interviews or to request high-resolution images, please contact:

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