Opioid Overdose Prevention in Wisconsin

Overdose Deaths Involving Opioid Painkillers and Other Drugs, Wisconsin, 2000-2014

In Wisconsin, prescription opioids contributed to 392 (47%) of the 843 drug overdose deaths in 2014, while heroin contributed to 238 (28%) of the deaths.

Signs of an Opioid Overdose

Opioid refers to any drug - natural or synthetic - with morphine-like effects including illegal drugs such as heroin, as well as prescription painkillers (e.g., morphine, oxycodone, hydrocodone).

- Face is extremely pale and/or clammy to the touch
- Body is limp, cannot be awakened from sleep or is unable to speak
- Vomiting or making gurgling noises
- Fingernails or lips have a blue or purple cast
- Breathing is very slow or stopped
- Heartbeat is very slow or stopped

In Summary

Opioid overdose is a growing public health concern in Wisconsin, as it contributes to a steadily increasing number of unintentional deaths. The growing use of legal and illicit drugs such as heroin and prescription painkillers puts an increased number of Wisconsin residents at risk for an opioid overdose. Experts recommend five key opioid overdose prevention strategies: learn how to prevent and manage opioid overdose; call 911 if witnessing an overdose; seek training on naloxone administration; understand treatment options for individuals who are misusing or addicted to opioids; and support the use of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP). For further opioid overdose prevention resources, visit the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW) at www.arcw.org.

Naloxone

Naloxone, branded as Narcan®, is an antidote to opioid overdose.

Fast Facts

- In 2013, more Wisconsin residents died from drug overdose than motor vehicle accidents, suicide, or firearms.
- Wisconsin State Crime Lab cases involving heroin increased by 419% from 2008 to 2014.
- Of drug overdose deaths in Wisconsin in 2014, 82% were unintentional and 14% were attributed to suicide.
- Poisoning is the second leading cause of injury deaths in Wisconsin, with 97% of poisoning cases a result of drug use.
- 85% of all drug overdoses are witnessed. In April 2014, the Wisconsin Good Samaritan Law was amended to encourage individuals to summon aid in the event of an overdose.

Sources:
- Information Sheet on Opioid Overdose. 2014. World Health Organization (WHO).
- Preventing Fatal Opioid Overdose. 2015. AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin.
- The Buckle of Suicide in Wisconsin, 2007-2011. 2014 Wisconsin Department of Health Services and Medical College of Wisconsin.
- Wisconsin State Crime Lab Heroin Cases. 2012. Wisconsin Department of Justice.