



## Jackson County Department of Public Health

Anna Lippard  
Deputy Health Director  
828-587-8225

2021-20  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 3, 2021

### Opioid Awareness Can Save Lives

If someone you love takes opioids, whether prescribed or not, it is crucial for you to be aware of potentially life-saving steps to prevent an overdose from occurring. The CDC defines death from an opioid overdose when too much of the drug overwhelms the brain and interrupts the body's natural drive to breathe. During an overdose, breathing can be dangerously slowed or stopped, causing brain damage or death. It is important to recognize the signs and act fast.

Signs include:

- Small, constricted "pinpoint pupils"
- Falling asleep or loss of consciousness
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Choking or gurgling sounds
- Limp body
- Pale, blue, or cold skin

It may be hard to tell if a person is high or experiencing an overdose. If you aren't sure, it is best to treat it like an overdose – you could save a life.

- Call 911 immediately
- Administer naloxone, if available
- Try to keep the person awake and breathing
- Lay the person on their side to prevent choking
- Stay with the person until emergency workers arrive

If you are prescribed opioids, make sure you know all the risks and benefits of treatment and how to reduce the risk of addiction and overdose. Talk to your doctor about your pain management goals, non-opioid treatment options, and any side effects or concerns you have. You should never share your prescription opioids, take in greater amounts or more often than issued by your doctor, or combine opioids with alcohol, other substances or medications. Keep them in a safe and secure place that is locked, like a keyed medicine cabinet to keep them secure from children, family, friends, and visitors. Properly discard expired or unused prescription opioids by taking them to a drop box near you, like the Jackson County Sheriff's Office or Walgreens Pharmacy.

If you or someone close to you needs help for a substance use disorder, talk to your doctor or call SAMHSA's National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP. Learn about naloxone, a life-saving drug



## **Jackson County Department of Public Health**

that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose when administered in time. Be familiar with the Good Samaritan Laws, which protect overdose victims and people seeking medical care for an overdose victim from possession charges. To learn more, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/opioids>. To get involved, contact Janelle Messer Health Education Supervisor at (828) 587-8238 or [janellemesser@jacksonnc.org](mailto:janellemesser@jacksonnc.org).

###