



NEWS

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Montco Expands Naloxone Availability in the County

Norristown, PA (May 31, 2016) – Beginning June 1, 2016, the Montgomery County Health Department (MCHD), in partnership with the Montgomery County Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs, will make NARCAN® Nasal Spray kits available at their three health centers:

Norristown Health Center

Montgomery County
Human Services Center
1430 DeKalb Street
Norristown, PA 19401-0311
610-278-5145

Pottstown Health Center

364 King Street
Pottstown, PA, 19464
610-970-5040

Willow Grove Health Center

Montgomery County
Eastern Court House Annex
102 York Road, Suite 401
Willow Grove, PA 19090
215-784-5415

NARCAN® Nasal Spray kits (two single units) will be dispensed at all three health centers to persons at risk of experiencing an opiate-related overdose; or to a family member, friend, or other person in a position to assist an individual at risk of experiencing an opiate-related overdose.

The kits will be available for:

- Eligible residents without insurance, or
- Residents with a financial hardship that renders them unable to afford the copay at a participating pharmacy

Opiate overdose deaths continue to be a major public health problem in the United States, contributing significantly to accidental deaths among those who misuse heroin and prescription opioid drugs. According to a 2015 report, Pennsylvania ranked ninth in the country in drug overdose deaths (18.9 per 100,000 people); drug overdoses were also reported as the leading cause of injury. Between 2009 and 2014, deaths due to opiates in Montgomery County increased by 72%. Just over half (51%)

were attributed to heroin. Opioid related deaths continue to climb and will continue to do so without a comprehensive approach to combat this growing epidemic.

Currently, officers in 26 of 49 Montgomery County police departments carry Naloxone while on duty; a 37% increase from 2015. Since the program started in mid-2015, there have been 41 documented saves across the county (19 in 2015; 22 in 2016). In addition, as a result of extensive pharmacy outreach, 24 independently owned pharmacies have dispensed 278 Naloxone kits to the general public to date under the County Standing Order. Five chain pharmacies are also dispensing Naloxone using a standing order by Pennsylvania Physician General Levine.

Although major progress has been demonstrated, the barriers that persist are reminders of the ongoing need to collaborate and establish key relationships in both the public and private sectors. Encouragement is needed for providers to consider non-opioid treatment of pain whenever possible. And when opioids are necessary, to follow published opioid prescribing guidelines and to always prescribe the smallest number of pills possible to reduce the amount of unused medication sitting in a medicine cabinet. MCHD encourages pharmacies to share information on how to properly dispose of unused opioids at the 32 Montgomery County Drug Take Back locations.

Currently, some private insurers' pre-authorization policies impede an individual's access to Naloxone, making the process confusing and often frustrating, causing a major barrier in receiving this necessary, life-saving medication. "By making Naloxone available at the three Montgomery County Health Centers located throughout the county at no cost to those who could not otherwise afford it, MCHD is taking a major step in ensuring Naloxone is accessible to everyone," said Dr. Val Arkoosh, Vice Chair of the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners and Interim Medical Director for the Montgomery County Department of Health.

More information on overdose prevention, a list of participating pharmacies in Montgomery County, and drug take back locations can be found at www.montcopa.org/overdoseprevention.