

SUBJECT LINE: Member News: COVID-19 and Opioid Use



August 2021

Member News: COVID-19 and Opioid Use

Thank you for being a member of Scott and White Health Plan. Today we're writing with information about the increased risk for serious illness from COVID-19 for people taking opioid medications. Keep reading to learn more about the health risks of opioids – and what you can do to stay safe.

Understanding Risks

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), people who take opioids – whether as treatment for chronic pain or as part of a substance use disorder – are at higher risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19. They are more likely to experience:

- Hospitalization
- Admission to an intensive care unit
- Use of a ventilator for breathing
- Death

Taking opioids affects breathing and the function of the immune system. It also increases a person's risk for accidental overdose.

Increasing Safety

The CDC recommends a COVID-19 vaccine for most people ages 12 years and older. Learn more about the [safety and effectiveness of vaccines](#), and [sign up for a vaccine at no cost](#). Getting a COVID-19 vaccine helps protect against infection and serious illness, which is especially important for people taking opioids.

Another way to increase safety is to keep naloxone on hand. Naloxone is a medication that can stop or reverse an opioid overdose when it's happening. Naloxone is available as a nasal spray (Narcan®) or as an injection, and your doctor or pharmacist can teach you how to use it.

If you or someone in your household is taking opioids, having naloxone available can help save a life during an overdose emergency. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about obtaining naloxone and Narcan® Nasal Spray.

Learning More

Read these articles to learn more about COVID-19 and opioid safety:

- From the CDC – [“COVID-19: People with Certain Medical Conditions”](#)
- From the CDC – [“COVID-19 and People Who Use Drugs or Have Substance Use Disorder”](#)
- From the National Institute on Drug Abuse – [“COVID-19 & Substance Use”](#)
- From Scott and White Health Plan – [“Naloxone Saves Lives: New Advice on Opioid Medication Safety”](#)
- From Scott and White Health Plan – [“Narcan Nasal Spray Available for \\$0 Copay”](#)

For additional questions, please call the Scott and White Health Plan Pharmacy Help Desk at 800.728.7947.

Be safe and well,

Scott and White Health Plan

Visit the member portal at [MyBSWHealth.com](https://www.MyBSWHealth.com)

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