

Covid-19 Impacts Medication-Assisted Treatment

Methadone is a potent and highly regulated medication in the treatment of opioid use disorder and until this year could only be dispensed in Opioid Treatment Programs (OTP's). According to the Partnership for Drug Free Kids, some 350,000 Americans rely on these methadone clinics for daily opioid addiction treatment.

As an opioid itself, methadone blocks the receptors in the brain from the effects of heroin and painkillers. It is expected that patients receiving methadone as treatment will have less craving for heroin/opioids and less withdrawal symptoms and fewer medical complications. As Covid-19 has impacted every aspect of our society, substance abuse and medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is no exception.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), individuals with a substance use disorder are at higher risk and more likely to experience unique challenges regarding transmission of the virus. Risks include: decreased access to health care, housing insecurity, and greater likelihood for incarceration.

In March of this year, The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) eased some restrictions on medication-assisted treatment for opioids, including methadone and buprenorphine as well. Buprenorphine works similarly to methadone, but only partially activates opioid receptors, often reducing drug

use and protecting patients from overdose. Because buprenorphine is considered safer than methadone, less monitoring is needed, and it can be prescribed by primary care providers who complete a special training course.

Restrictions were also relaxed around initial in-person assessments prior to treatment. Previously, providers had to meet new patients for an in-person evaluation.

As of March 16, 2020, and continuing for as long as the Secretary's designation of a public health emergency remains in effect, DEA-registered practitioners in all areas of the United States may issue prescriptions for all schedule II-V controlled substances to patients for whom they have not conducted an in-person medical evaluation, provided all of the following conditions are met:

- The prescription is issued for a legitimate medical purpose by a practitioner acting in the usual course of his/her professional practice;
- The telemedicine communication is conducted using an audio-visual, real-time, two-way interactive communication system; and
- The practitioner is acting in accordance with applicable Federal and State laws.

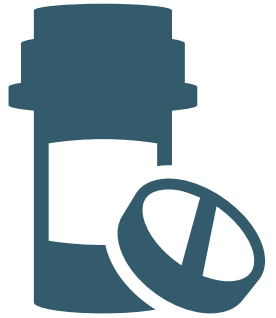
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With the pandemic, just as there have been disruptions in the supplies of toilet paper and hand sanitizer, a disruption in the trade of illicit drugs, like heroin, is also expected. Patients who relapse may turn to heroin that is contaminated or is stronger than they think. Having naloxone on hand helps give family or friends the tools to prevent a lethal overdose. Therefore now more than ever, it's important to provide every opportunity for naloxone in the home.

Naloxone is the FDA-approved drug used in the emergency treatment of a known or suspected opioid overdose, to reduce the life-threatening effects of an opioid overdose. Naloxone can quickly restore normal breathing to a person if breathing has slowed or stopped because of an opioid overdose. As most accidental overdoses occur in a home setting, it was developed for first responders, family, friends, and caregivers. However, it is important to note that naloxone has no effect on someone who does not have opioids in their system, and it is not a treatment for opioid use disorder.

What you need to know about naloxone:

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Upstate's Covid-19 Hotline Opens

On March 14, 2020 Upstate Medical University launched the Covid-19 Hotline in response to the overwhelming community need for guidance around issues related to the virus.

This start-up is a joint effort of the Upstate New York Poison Center and The Upstate Triage and Transfer Center.

The essential function of the hotline is to answer questions from the general public about: testing and symptoms; precautions to reduce the risk of spread and contact; community resources on transportation to testing sites and food accessibility.

Additionally, the line aims to help reduce unnecessary emergency department and physician office visits to ease

the pressure on our health care system and to provide support to the county departments of health.

To date, Upstate's Covid-19 hotline has managed over 16,000 calls since inception, averaging 300 calls per day. Although most calls are from Onondaga county, calls have been logged from almost all of our 54-county coverage area of NYS. The line also acts as a resource on the services offered in surrounding counties.

The line is staffed primarily by registered nurses employed by Upstate with health educators and other support staff also on board.

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- Designed to be easy to use but training is provided by many organizations throughout our 54-county area.
- Available from your pharmacist, without a prescription or from your doctor
- Covered by most major insurance plans
- Repeated doses may be necessary
- Rescue breathing or CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) may be given while waiting for emergency medical help.

Naloxone however, is not a substitute for emergency medical care as even an awakening patient may relapse into respiratory depression. Emergency medical help should be called right away after giving the first dose of naloxone.

The signs and symptoms of an opioid emergency can return after naloxone is given. If so, another dose would be administered after 2 to 3 minutes and the person should be watched closely until emergency help arrives.

Naloxone may cause serious side effects, including sudden opioid withdrawal symptoms which may include body aches, diarrhea, increased heart rate, fever, runny nose, sneezing,

sweating, yawning, nausea or vomiting, nervousness, restlessness or irritability, shivering or trembling, stomach cramping, weakness or increased blood pressure.

Most importantly, in light of these current events, it is essential anyone involved in at-home medically-assisted treatment realize the importance of safe storage. Methadone, buprenorphine and similar drugs must be stored safely, up and out of reach and out of sight. These strong medications can not only harm but can kill a child. Store them not only in a safe place but in a locked location to reduce the chance of anyone, especially a child, accessing these highly potent drugs. Unfortunately, these poisonings not only can but do happen.

The UNYPC Reminds you to "Keep Your Family Safe" from unintentional poisoning ([click here](#))

The more potentially dangerous the medicine the more important to lock up poisons. Prevent a heartbreak. Lock up all medications.

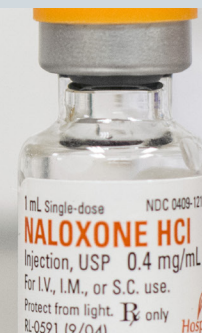
Resources:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/otp-guidance-20200316.pdf>

<https://drugfree.org/article/medication-assisted-treatment/>

For Opioid Treatment Providers in NYS:

www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/general/resources/oo_directory/index.htm



ALCOHOL PRECAUTIONS



Liquor store sales nationwide have increased 55%. Online sales, 243%. Increased availability in the home can lead to a poisoning. Ethyl alcohol (ethanol) is found in all alcoholic drinks.

Even a small amount can be toxic to a child!

An increase in the amount of alcohol found in the home demands increased efforts to **keep all alcohol out of the reach of children.**



Some cleaning products contain alcohol and other potent chemicals. **Store all cleaning products out of reach of children.** Mixing alcohol with bleach can produce **toxic fumes!**

Hand sanitizers have flown off the shelves during the pandemic. Many are making hand sanitizers at home using isopropyl alcohol, which contains 60-99% alcohol.



Isopropyl alcohol is twice as toxic as ethyl alcohol, found in wine, beer and liquor. If a curious child should drink any amount of alcohol, call the Poison Center!

A child drinking alcohol can act drunk. Effects include **sleepiness, slurred speech, an unsteady walk, and vomiting.**

Alcohol is also irritating to the digestive tract. If an excessive amount is consumed, it can lead to **dehydration, low blood pressure, shock, and coma.**



Children love to imitate! Keep all alcohol out of the reach of children, **preferably locked away.**

Alcohol is also flammable. Important to keep all alcohol away from an open flame.

Poison emergency? Poison information?
**Call the Poison Center! 24 hours a day,
7 days a week, 365 days a year.**

We're only a phone call away.



UPSTATE
MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

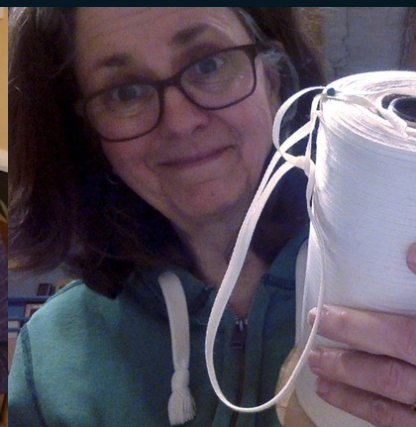
Poison Center Organizes Sewers

A new "mission" of the Upstate New York Poison Center of Upstate Medical University includes sewing masks as a volunteer contribution to the communities we serve.

With public safety concerns around COVID-19, Gail Banach, the poison center's director of public education and communications cobbled together an eager group of neighbors to sew masks for employees in need and the general public. Sixteen dedicated volunteers, although strangers prior to forming the group, agreed to band together to help members of the community stay safe.

To date, over 850 masks have been distributed to Upstate and to the Samaritan Center, a local food kitchen in Syracuse, NY, serving close to 10,000 meals monthly to those in need... Banach says, "at this point, we will continue until we run out of material, our machines break or this nightmare ends!"

A special thanks to sewers: Kathy Bunting, Debbie Fitzpatrick, Jill Reed, Diane Jillson, Kathy Miranda, Mary Pat Mihal, Collete Smolinski, Cheryl Molesky, Judy O'Rourke, Margaret Ryniker and Jean Donegan. Material cutters included: Pat Forken, Martha Williams, Cheryl Roy and Laurie Walker. Most of the materials used, including cotton fabric, thread and elastic, have been purchased or donated by the sewers.

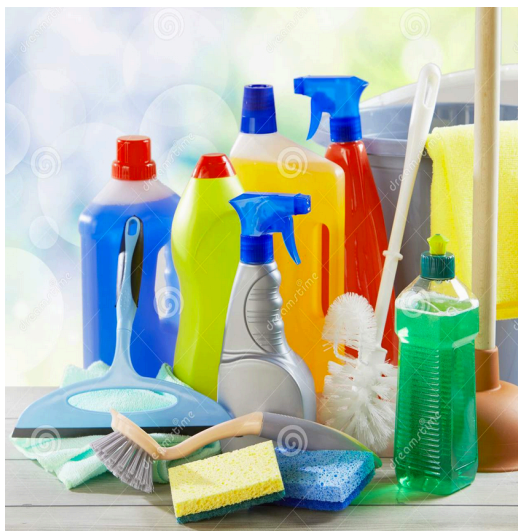




Precautions When Using Cleaning Products and Disinfectants



Cleaning Products and Disinfectants



SAFE USE

- Cleaning products/disinfectants are designed to kill germs on hard surfaces usually in bathrooms and kitchens.
- They are not to be ingested, injected into the body or sprayed on skin.
- **Never ingest, inject or spray these products on your body! They are chemicals that pose a high risk for a poisoning, if label directions are not followed carefully!**

READ THE LABEL FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS

- Not all cleaners kill both viral & bacterial germs so be sure to read the label.
- Follow directions carefully, including warnings/ precautions.
- Open windows, or allow for air movement as inhaled fumes can pose a risk for poisoning. Mixing cleaners can product deadly fumes!

**ALWAYS STORE UP, AWAY AND OUT OF
SIGHT OF CHILDREN, EVEN DURING USE,
TO AVOID A POISONING!**



**IN A POISON EMERGENCY OR FOR
POISON INFORMATION, CALL THE
POISON EXTERTS AT 1-800-222-1222**



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