



Opioids overdoses deaths prevention programme in Estonia



Naloxone is a medication that is used as antidote in the case of opioid (fentanyl, heroin, methadone, morphine) overdoses. Naloxone is injected into a muscle, usually in the arm, buttock or thigh, of the person who has overdosed. Naloxone is not a narcotic drug and therefore there is no danger of abuse. The following doses are used as medication in Estonia: *Prenoxad 1mg/ml* as an injection solution in a syringe and *Nexodal 0,4mg/ml* as an injection solution in an ampule. In November of 2017, a sales permit was issued in Estonia for naloxone nasal spray *Nyxoid 1,8mg/0,1ml*. Naloxone is prescription drug.



As of September 2013, based on the action plan of the National Institute for Health Development and a regulation issued by the Government of the Republic, naloxone is also available within the framework of the programme for prevention of opioid overdose deaths. The target group of the programme is people that inject opioids and their families, as well as workers that come in contact with people who inject opioids, and who have completed a training course on identifying overdoses and administering naloxone to overdose victims. Naloxone is only provided to people who have completed the training and this is done in cooperation with a health care provider or an organisation that provides harm reduction services. In addition to providing information about overdoses and providing first aid, one of the important goals of the training is to provide instruction in the use of pre-filled syringes of naloxone and to emphasise the necessity of calling an ambulance after the naloxone is administered.

A more detailed data of the deaths caused by drug overdoses is available in the fact sheet on the illicit drug use situation. In Estonia in 2017, there were a total of 110 death caused by drug overdoses. There are no national statistics on the number of times ambulances have been dispatched

to deal with overdoses. However, if we look at the number of times ambulances have been dispatched in Tallinn, we can see that this occurred 861 times in 2015, and in 2016, it increased drastically to 1,203 times. This upward trend continued in 2017 to 1,396 cases. The almost 40% increase in 2016 can be explained by the arrival of new, previously unknown, and extremely strong analogues of fentanyl on the market (*furanylfentanyl*, *acrylfentanyl* and *carfentanyl*).

In Estonia, the naloxone programme is being implemented in Harju County and East Viru County (a total of six service providers). From 2013 to the end of 2017, 2,085 people have completed the naloxone training and 2,089 sets of pre-filled naloxone syringes have been distributed. In addition, a total of 597 pre-filled naloxone syringes were distributed again. In most cases (90%), the reason for the repeat distribution was the use of the previous syringe to save a life. Based on the 2017 report of the National Institute for Health Development (NIHD), 115 pre-filled syringes were used to save a life (there were a total of 131 repeat distributions).

The exact breakdown for 2015-2017 is provided in table 1.

¹ After the completion of the training, the naloxone can only be provided (i.e. prescribed) by a doctor listed in the register of healthcare workers.

Table 1. Results of the naloxone programme, 2015–2017

	2015	2016	2017
Number of group training sessions	88	57	50
Number of individual training sessions	99	142	139
Total number of participants	514	434	315
Number of naloxone recipients	513	433	325
Number of repeat distributions of naloxone	115	167	131



Source: NIHD 2018

Naloxon in prison

As of 2015, naloxone has also been distributed by prison medical departments that provide instruction to prisoners who have previously injected opioids and give them kits with pre-filled naloxone syringes to take with them upon their release. From June 2015 to the end of 2016 a total of 107 prisoners were instructed in the Viru Prison, Tallinn Prison, Harku and Murru Prison and Tartu Prison; and they were given 85 kits with pre-filled naloxone syringes. In 2017, instruction was provided to 32 prisoners that had been diagnosed with opioid addiction (22 in the Tartu Prison and 10 in the Viru Prison). Two workers were trained in the Tallinn Prison, who will start to provide training in the future.

