

# Are You

# Overdose Aware?



If you or someone you know requires a Naloxone kit please contact Christine Lessmann, Diane Procter or Sarah Bennett at Q'wemtsín Health Society at 250-314-6732 or Dave Manual at Tk'emlúps Indian Band at 250-828-9704

## **What is naloxone?**

Naloxone, or Narcan<sup>®</sup>, is an antidote to opioid overdose. Taking too much of opioid drugs (like morphine, heroin, methadone, oxycodone, and fentanyl) can make breathing slow down or stop. Naloxone reverses this, restoring normal breathing and consciousness. Giving naloxone can prevent death or brain damage from lack of oxygen during an opioid overdose. It does not work for non-opioid overdoses (like cocaine, ecstasy, GHB or alcohol). However, if an overdose involves multiple substances, including opioids, naloxone helps by temporarily removing the opioid from the equation.

## **How is naloxone given?**

You can give naloxone by injection (into a muscle, vein, or under the skin) or intranasally (sprayed into the nose). In BC, the Take Home Naloxone program supplies injectable naloxone (the only type currently approved in Canada). You can inject naloxone through clothing into the muscle of the upper arm, upper leg, or buttock. Safety needles are provided with the naloxone to avoid needle-stick injuries, and facilitate safe needle disposal.

## **How does naloxone work?**

Both naloxone and opioids bind to the same sites in the brain, and these sites affect breathing. However, naloxone binds more tightly than the opioids, knocking the opioids off the receptors and restoring breathing. Naloxone acts fast (usually within 5 minutes), and the protective effect lasts for 30 to 90 minutes. The body will have broken down some of the opioids over time, but naloxone does not destroy the opioids. So, if large doses, strong opioids (like fentanyl), or long-acting opioids (like