

Management of opioid induced respiratory depression in Adults:

(Revised edition)

Opioid drugs are effective analgesic agents. However opioids can also cause sedation and respiratory depression if given in excess. A small dose of Naloxone (Narcan) will selectively reverse these ill effects but still maintain a degree of analgesia; a larger dose will reverse the analgesia as well. This is obviously undesirable. Naloxone should therefore be given in repeated **small** doses to reverse the respiratory depression and sedation.

Who needs Naloxone?

Patients only need naloxone if they meet **all 3 of the following criteria:**

1. recently received an opioid drug
2. respiratory rate of less than **8** breaths/min
3. AVPU score of **P** or **U**

What to do?

1. stop the administration of the opioid
2. administer oxygen
3. summon help
4. ask co-worker to prepare naloxone
5. remain with patient and continue to attempt to rouse

How to dilute Naloxone?

1. draw up 0.4mg (1 ampoule) of Naloxone into a 5ml syringe
2. dilute with 3ml of normal saline to give a total volume of 4ml
3. the drug concentration is therefore 0.1mg/ml (or 100mcg/ml)

How to administer Naloxone?

View flow chart over the page

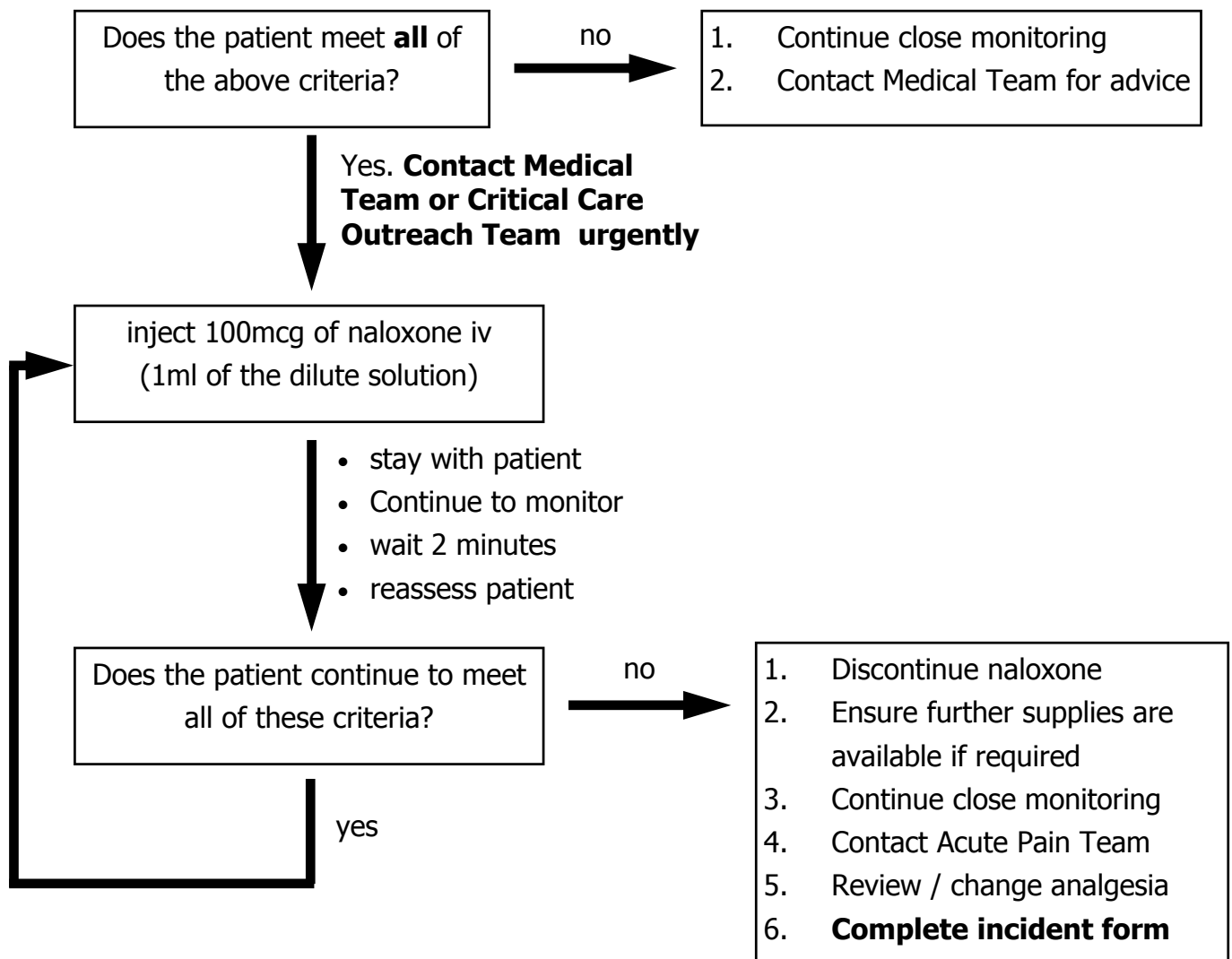
What to do once the crisis has passed?

1. Continue close monitoring for at least an hour after the event
2. Naloxone has a reasonably short duration of action. Further doses may be required
3. Notify Acute Pain Team to review analgesia
4. Notify primary physician
5. Document actions in medical notes
6. **Complete an incident form to highlight opioid toxicity concerns**

How to administer Naloxone

The criteria:

1. recent opioid drug
2. respiratory rate < **8** breaths/min
3. AVPU score of **P** or **U**



If repeated doses of Naloxone is required consider Naloxone Infusion (Refer to Trust Intravenous Drug Administration Policy)

PHNT classifies Naloxone as a Critical Medicine. It "must never be unintentionally omitted or delayed as the timeliness of administration is crucial to patient care and safety"