



News from the Office of  
**ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ**

**NEWS RELEASE**

**Health Commissioner  
Dr. Gale Burstein**

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**Deaths Attributed to Heroin and Drug Overdose on the Rise**

***Preventing Opiate Related Deaths is Goal of Training***

ERIE COUNTY, NY— The Erie County Department of Health advises residents that death attributable to heroin is a preventable tragedy. “Heroin addiction continues to be a major health concern” **said Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein. “If we can prevent death from overdose and provide appropriate treatment, lives can be saved”.**

Heroin overdose is unfortunately becoming an increasingly frequent tragedy in Erie County and in the United States and accounts for many preventable deaths. Heroin addicts can easily consume more than expected because they can never ensure the purity or strength of the heroin, leading to serious problems like seizures, heart attacks, strokes and even death. Because of the inconsistencies in purity, a heroin addict that takes the same dose for months or even years can overdose without changing any part of their routine, and new addicts can suffer from a heroin overdose after consuming or injecting even the smallest amount of heroin.

If help is received in time, a heroin overdose can be counter-acted using an opioid antagonist medication, such as naloxone (Narcan). This medication reverses the effects of heroin and brings the person back to consciousness. Unfortunately, not everyone can obtain help in time or realize that help is needed. When someone is found unresponsive, it may not be obvious that the cause could be drug overdose. Hence, many people needlessly suffer and die from the overdose, in situations that could have been prevented.

ECDOH will be sponsoring training for Providers, Physicians and first Responders on how to administer Narcan. The goal of this training is to reduce the number of Heroin related overdose deaths by increasing the number of individuals trained to intervene. For information on this training please go to: [http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/harm\\_reduction/opioidprevention/index.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/harm_reduction/opioidprevention/index.htm)

One of the greatest risks of being a heroin addict is death from heroin overdose. Each year about one percent of all heroin addicts in the United States die from an overdose of heroin despite having developed tolerance to the effects of the drug. In addition, chronic, preventable diseases, such as hepatitis C and HIV are on the rise from needle use with heroin.

For more information on heroin and addiction go to:

New York State Department of Health

[http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/harm\\_reduction/opioidprevention/index.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/harm_reduction/opioidprevention/index.htm)

or

[www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/harm\\_reduction/opioidprevention/docs/providerfactsheet.pdf](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/harm_reduction/opioidprevention/docs/providerfactsheet.pdf)

National Institute on Drug Abuse

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/heroin>

or

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/heroin-abuse-addiction/what-are-treatments-heroin-addiction>