

Fentanyl Alert Discussion Sheet for Educators

Curiosity and risk taking is a normal part of the teen and young adult years. The teenage brain continues to develop throughout the early part of adulthood – especially the areas in charge of impulse control. A student may find themselves in a risky situation where alcohol and drugs may be available. Deciding to use alcohol or other drugs is a personal choice. Like all personal choices, it is important that students are informed of all the risks and benefits.

The issue

KFL&A Public Health is alerting local schools and communities that in recent weeks in our region there have been several overdoses and deaths from fake prescription opioid medications. Fake prescription medications are made to look like the real prescription opioids. Prescription opioids include medication like morphine, Percocet, Oxycodone, and fentanyl. Getting drugs from a drug dealer, ordered online, or from a friend is very risky and potentially life threatening. **Within our region, illicit fentanyl has been confirmed in a variety of both fake prescription pills, as well as hidden in other street drugs such as cocaine, crystal meth, heroin, and marijuana. Illicit fentanyl is known to be deadly in small amounts, making the risk of overdosing extremely high.**

What is prescription fentanyl and how is it different from illicit fentanyl?

Opioids are a depressant drug, which means that they slow down the part of the brain that controls breathing. Overdose of opioids can result in death because breathing stops. All opioid drugs can be dangerous and need to be taken as prescribed by a medical professional. Prescription fentanyl is a pain medication and a type of opioid that comes in a patch or liquid and is manufactured under strict guidelines and in a controlled environment.

Non-prescription fentanyl is known as illicit fentanyl, and is made in underground labs, where production is not controlled. We currently know that there 14 different types of illicit fentanyl, all with varying levels of toxicity. Illicit fentanyl, especially mixed in with other street drugs or being sold as fake prescription drugs, have a higher risk of causing a fatal overdose because:

- A small amount of fentanyl can be fatal.
- People may not be aware that they are consuming it as it can be disguised as other drugs.
- All opioids (prescription and non-prescription) have a risk of overdose.

What do I need to know?

- Prescription fentanyl is about 100 times more toxic than morphine.
- Illicit fentanyl may be as high as 10,000 times more toxic than morphine.
- The fact is, you never really know what you are getting.
- Fentanyl is being sold on the street as:

Faded 80's	Fake Oxy's
Greenies	Green Beans
Green Monsters	Fentanyl Powder

For discussion with students

“What can be done to reduce the risk of using illicit drugs?”

1. **It's your choice!** Most teens do not use illicit drugs. Only you should be making the choice of what you do or don't put into your body. Never take anything when you are not 100% sure what it is or where it has come from.
2. **Do your research!**
You need to know and understand what you are putting into your body. Can you answer the following questions with certainty:

- What is the substance?
- How was it made?
- Has it been altered?
- What should the substance do to you?
- What are the side effects of taking the substance?
- What will you do if your experience is not what you expected?
- If it looks, smells, or tastes different, be cautious about using it!

3. Prevent an overdose from happening!

The only way to avoid an accidental overdose is to not use drugs. If you choose to use, following these tips will help to reduce the risk of an overdose:

- Never use while alone. Make sure someone is close to help you or to provide Naloxone if needed.
- Don't mix a drug with other drugs or alcohol.
- If you are using a new substance, always take a small amount first to see how it is going to affect you.
- Overdoses can happen to anyone, there is no magic formula to say who will overdose and who will not.
- Use where help is easily available. Have a Naloxone kit available, and get trained on how to use it.

4. Know the signs of an overdose!

People having an overdose from opioid medications such as fentanyl will have one or more of the following signs:

- The person is “**nodding off**”, or won't wake up easily, or is unresponsive
- Breathing very slowly or not at all
- Lips and fingernails are blue
- Skin is cold and clammy
- Body is limp
- Person may be snoring or gurgling
- Person may be choking or throwing-up
- Pupils are tiny
- A slow heart rate

All signs of an overdose should be treated as a medical emergency.

5. Know what to do if someone is in trouble!

- CALL 9-1-1 if you think someone might be overdosing, make the call, even if Naloxone has been given.
- Get trained on how to give Naloxone and have a Naloxone kit with you.
- Get trained in first aid and CPR.
- Turn the person on their side, and put them into the recovery position.

What is a Naloxone Kit?

Naloxone is a drug that can temporarily stop a fentanyl or other opioid drug overdose. Naloxone can save your life by allowing you time to get to a hospital to receive medical treatment. Naloxone kits are available free of charge to anyone at risk of an opioid overdose, as well as their friends and family members. If you have a Naloxone kit, you should carry it with you to ensure that it is available in case there is a situation when the use of substances results in an overdose.

Naloxone kits are available at local pharmacies. A full list of pharmacies can be found at www.kflaph.ca/naloxone.

This resource was adapted with permission from Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health 2017.