

Fentanyl Warning for Parents/Guardians and Students

November 22, 2021

Overdose deaths in Pima County are on the rise. Last year fentanyl was the number one drug contributing to overdose deaths in Pima County. This year the trend has worsened. Fentanyl is now the top cause of death for people under 20 in Pima County.

WHAT IS FENTANYL AND WHY IS IT DANGEROUS?

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid 50 to 100 times more potent than heroin or morphine. In the medical field it is used to treat severe pain, but it is also produced and sold illegally. Illicit fentanyl is often found in counterfeit pills that can look like legitimate pharmaceutical pills. Unsuspecting users — especially young people — may be unaware of the possibility that legitimate-looking pills may not be what they seem, and could be deadly.



WHAT CAN WE DO TO KEEP KIDS SAFE?

- Recognize the signs and symptoms of drug use
 - Irritability, disrupted sleep, poor eating habits, decreased school performance, avoiding time with family, and withdrawing from normal activities and/or interests.
- Recognize what illicit fentanyl looks like
 - Fentanyl has been found in counterfeit oxycodone pills marked as "M30," counterfeit Percocet, and counterfeit Xanax. It has also been found in pills marked "K9," "A215," and "V48." These pills are typically blue, green, or white in color, though counterfeit pills may occur in any color or shape. Fentanyl has also been found in powders.
- Teach about the dangers of fentanyl
 - Kids and adolescents may not be aware that a single pill can be deadly. Young people should be educated about what fentanyl is, why it is dangerous, and where it might be encountered. Counterfeit pills are especially dangerous because they purport to be something they are not. Never take a pill unless it was prescribed to you and obtained from a pharmacy.

- **Secure and/or dispose of prescription medications**
 - Secure all prescription medications in a lock box in your home.
 - If a child is prescribed an opioid by a pediatrician, supervise daily until the medication is finished, use a pill box to keep track, and never let your child manage on their own.
 - Dispose of unused or expired medications. Find a disposal location near you at www.pima.gov/disposeamed.

- **Recognize overdoses and intervene before they become fatal**
 - Signs of an overdose can include slow or no breathing; snoring or gurgling; paleness; cool skin; blue lips; and extreme drowsiness.
 - If you suspect an overdose, call 911 immediately and stay with the person. Arizona's Good Samaritan law will protect you and the person who is overdosing from drug possession charges.
 - Give naloxone (Narcan®). Multiple doses of naloxone may be necessary to counteract the potency of fentanyl. Naloxone works in the body for 30 to 90 minutes. It is possible for overdose symptoms to return after naloxone wears off.
 - Find out where you can get naloxone at PimaHelpline.org/Naloxone.
 - Lastly, many fatal overdoses occur during the night. If you suspect an overdose, NEVER leave a person alone or allow them to "sleep it off"

HOW IS THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT RESPONDING TO THE FENTANYL CRISIS?

- The Pima County Health Department has issued a number of public health alerts in response to the rise in overdose deaths, [particularly fentanyl-involved deaths](#).

- On June 9, 2021, a Drug Overdose Death Public Health Emergency was issued in Pima County. PCHD launched a fentanyl awareness campaign based on the DEA's One Pill Can Kill campaign to bring attention to the presence of fentanyl in our community.

- We urge all parents/guardians to stock naloxone or Narcan®, a medication that counteracts the life-threatening effects of an opioid overdose, in their home first aid kits. Narcan® is now available in limited supply at Pima County libraries and can be purchased at any pharmacy.

- We also offer the following trainings to the community at no cost:
 - Narcan®: How to recognize an opioid overdose and administer Narcan®
 - Rx360: Understanding prescription drug misuse and abuse
 - Strengthening Families Program: An evidence-based family skills training program found to improve family relationships, school performance, and reduce substance misuse in children.

To learn more about these trainings visit www.pima.gov/MentalHealth. To register for a training, send your request to CMHA@pima.gov or call 520-724-7470.