

Fentanyl Fact Sheet for Parents

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. Your teen may find themselves in a risky situation where alcohol and/or drugs may be available.

The issue

KFL&A Public Health is alerting local schools and communities in our region that in recent weeks 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 are 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.
- The fact is, you never really know what you are getting. Street drugs can look like medication.
- Fentanyl is being sold on the street as:
 - Faded 80's
 - Greenies
 - Green Monsters
 - Fake Oxy's
 - Green Beanies
 - Fentanyl Powder

Prevent and reduce the risk of opioid use

- Set clear expectations, and talk to your teen about opioids.
- Lock up all medications and check regularly to watch for missing medication. Return unused medications to your pharmacy.
- If your child has an injury or pain issue, like wisdom teeth removal, speak to your doctor, dentist, or pharmacist about the risks of different pain medications, monitor their usage, and take back unused medication to the pharmacy.
- Be in the know! Know who your teen is with, what they are doing, and where they are.
- Ongoing communication with your teen has proven to prevent substance misuse.

Start the conversation -- Tips on talking to your teen about drugs

- Offer your child control of the situation. Let them pick the time and place.
- Look for opportunities, like when you discuss school or current events. Remain informed. You can use an external reference like social media, newspaper, or TV show to start a conversation with your teen.
- Plan the main points you want to discuss, rather than speaking on impulse. Keep it brief and target a few main points.
- Listen to your child and respect their opinions. If they see you as a good listener, they may be more inclined to trust your input. Ask about their concerns, after asking questions, listen. The best way to talk to your teen about drug use is to listen to them.
- Focus on facts rather than emotions. If you hear that a young person is using drugs, you may feel anger, sadness, fear, or confusion. These feelings are natural, but talking about the issue is more productive than talking about your feelings.
- Respect their independence. Let your child know you are trying to help them to make good decisions and communicate that your main concern is their well-being.
- You are your child's most important role model and their best defense against drug use. Be open, supportive and involved.

Know what to do if someone is in trouble (overdosing)

- Call 9-1-1 right away if you think someone might be overdosing - make the call.
- Get trained on how to give Naloxone and have a Naloxone kit with you.
- Get trained in CPR.
- Know how to put someone in the recovery position and stay with the person until help arrives.

Get a Naloxone kit

Naloxone is the drug used to temporarily stop an overdose from illicit fentanyl and other opioid pain medication. This allows time for emergency services to get the person to a hospital to receive medical treatment to save their life. 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.

You can get a free Naloxone kit from local pharmacies. They will provide training on how to use the kit. A list of participating pharmacies can be found at www.kflaph.ca/naloxone.

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