



What's Happening?

The Dangers of Synthetic Drugs

Deaths from fake pills with fentanyl are surging across California and the country. Children purchase what they think are OxyContin, Percocet or Xanax pills via social media, but drug dealers are making these fake pills with the cheaper, stronger and more deadly synthetic drug called fentanyl to increase their profits. Fentanyl is up to 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine. Fentanyl is odorless, tasteless and colorless. One pill can kill.

The tablets are so well made that even experienced users say that they cannot tell the difference between a counterfeit pill and a pill manufactured by a pharmaceutical company.

The amount of fentanyl needed to overdose and die is equivalent to two grains of sand. These are not pharmaceutical-grade painkillers. Instead, they are pills made by drug dealers, mostly outside the country. There is no quality control. Pills in the same batch can have wildly varying levels of fentanyl.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a [health alert](#) in December 2020, because of an increase in synthetic opioids in the western United States.

According to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) California Overdose Surveillance Dashboard:

- Emergency department visits related to non-fatal opioid overdoses in California's youth ages 10 to 19 have increased 226 percent from 2018 (379 total) to 2021 (1,237 total).

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- Opioid-related overdose deaths in California's youth ages 10 to 19 increased from 2018 (54 total) to 2021 (245 total), marking a 353 percent increase during two years, largely driven by fentanyl.
- Fentanyl-related overdose deaths in California's youth ages 10 to 19 increased from 2018 (36 total) to 2021 (239 total), a 563 percent increase.

Officials say that young people find pills especially appealing, because they are cheap, more socially acceptable than meth or heroin, and do not have a tell-tale smell like alcohol or marijuana.

How can you help?

One of the best ways to protect kids from substance abuse is by having regular and open conversations to educate them about the risks. Listen to them without judgment. Also **monitor their social media use**. Drugs are often offered by someone who they know or a stranger who they met on social media.

Watch for changes in their behavior including:

- Irregular eating or sleeping patterns
- Low energy
- General signs of depression or anxiety
- Unusual irritability
- Slipping grades
- Lack of interest in activities the individual once loved
- Drastic clothing style changes

If you notice a change, ask about it. Trust your instincts.

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Pills from friends and pills purchased online or from social media are not safe.

If a pill comes from anyone other than a doctor or pharmacist, do not take it. It could be a fake pill.

Fake pills are not controlled. Each pill can have a different amount of drug. Every fake pill is a risk.

Pills prescribed by a doctor (for an individual) should ONLY be used by that person and be used EXACTLY as instructed.

Do not take pills that are prescribed for someone else or that you receive from friends or other sources.

Everybody is different. A pill that is safe for one person can be harmful for someone else.

Any pill can be dangerous if it is taken wrongly (including too much or too often).

Fake pills can look just like real pills.

A fake fentanyl-laced pill can be any color. These fake pills are often blue, greenish, or pale-colored. More recently, law enforcement officers have seized fentanyl pressed into multi-colored pills that look like candy.

Some fake pills have marks that look like real pills. Some are marked "M30," "K9," "215," or "V48." Fake pills may have other markings or no markings.

Schools and families want to help.

It's ok to ask for help.

Students who tell us they are using drugs, or ask for help, will not be punished.

Students can speak with a school counselor, wellness staff, or another trusted adult.

- [Fentanyl Awareness Webinar](#)
- [San Diego County Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force website](#)
- [San Diego County Office of Education website](#)
- [Community & Parent Toolkits: Education & Awareness](#)
- [National Harm Reduction Center: Recognizing Opioid Overdose](#)
- [Up2SD.org](#)
- [California Department of Public Health: Naloxone FAQ](#)
- [Expect Fentanyl \(sccgov.org\)](#)
- [Fentanyl Takes Friends \(sccgov.org\)](#)
- [Song for Charlie \(Non-Profit Charity\)](#)
- [One Pill Can Kill \(dea.gov\)](#)

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- [The Real Deal on Fentanyl - Get the Facts](#) (Ad Council)
- [Parents \(dropthebomb.com\)](#) (Ad Council)
- [They Didn't Ask for Fentanyl](#) by Carlmont High School journalism students
- [California Overdose Surveillance Dashboard](#)
- [Fentanyl \(cdph.ca.gov\)](#)
- [Naloxone Distribution's Project FAQs page](#)
- 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Line: Call or Text to 988
- 24/7 Crisis Text Line: Text "HOME" to 741741