

Fentanyl Alert Discussion Sheet for Teachers

Curiosity and risk taking are 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 situation where alcohol and drugs are 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:

Renfrew County and District Health Unit is alerting local schools and communities that the potential for overdoses and deaths from fake prescription opioid drugs exists in Renfrew County and District. Fake prescription opioid drugs are made to look like real prescription opioids. Prescription opioids include morphine, Percocet and fentanyl. Getting any drugs from a drug dealer, a friend or online is risky and potentially life threatening.

Illicit fentanyls have been found in a variety of fake prescription pills as well as other street drugs such as cocaine, crystal meth, heroin and marijuana. Illicit fentanyls are known to be deadly in extremely low amounts such as the size of a grain of salt, making the risk of overdosing extremely high.

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

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

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 fentanyls, all with varying levels of toxicity. Illicit fentanyls, especially mixed with other street drugs or sold as fake prescription drugs have a higher risk of causing a fatal overdose because:

1. A small amount can be fatal – as little as the equivalent of a grain of salt.
2. People may not be aware that they are consuming it as it can be disguised as other drugs.

What do I need to know?

Prescription fentanyl is about 100 times more toxic than morphine.

Illicit fentanyls may be as high as 10,000 times more toxic than morphine.

You never really know what you're getting.

Fentanyl is being sold on the street as:

- Faded 80's
- Fake Oxy's
- Greenies
- Green Beanies
- Green Monsters
- Fentanyl Powder

For discussion with students: What can be done to reduce the risk if I choose to use illicit drugs?

1. It is your choice!

Only you should be making the choice of what you do or don't put into your body. Never take anything if 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!

If you choose to use, following these tips will help to prevent an overdose;

- Never use alone (if you end up in trouble there will be no one to help you).
- Never mix drugs (especially pain medication with alcohol or anti-anxiety medication).
- If you are using a new substance, always take a small test dose 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.

4. Know the signs of an overdose!

People having an overdose from pain 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
- They may be breathing very slowly or not at all
- Their lips and fingernails turn blue
- Their skin is cold and clammy
- Their body is limp
- They may be snoring or gurgling
- They may throw up

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

- **CALL 911** If you think someone is in trouble, **make the call**.
- Get trained on how to give Naloxone and have a Naloxone kit with you.
- Get trained in first aid and CPR.
- Know how to put someone in the recovery position and when to use the recovery position.



What is a Naloxone Kit?

- Naloxone is a drug that can reverse a fentanyl or other opioid overdose.

Naloxone kits are available free of charge to:

- Anyone 16 years of age or older who currently uses opioids or has a history of opioid use.
- A friend or family member of anyone at-risk of opioid overdose.

Naloxone kits are available at:

- Renfrew County and District Health Unit offices
- Ontario Addiction Treatment Centre
- Participating pharmacies



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097

www.rcdhu.com

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