



Renfrew County and District Health Unit
Media Release

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ALERT: Risk of Overdose from Fentanyl

What is fentanyl?

Fentanyl is an opioid that is much more toxic than most other opioids. Opioids include drugs like heroin, morphine, fentanyl, methadone and codeine. Fentanyl is usually prescribed in patch form as a painkiller. It is around 50 to 100 times more toxic than morphine. This makes the risk of accidental overdose much higher.

Fentanyl is also being made illegally and sold illegally. This illicit fentanyl is often made as a powder and mixed with drugs like cocaine, crack, heroin, marijuana and others. It is also being pressed into pills and sold as things like oxycodone (OxyContin, Fake Oxy's, Faded 80's) and Percocet or other pills including speed and ecstasy/MDMA.

What is the risk with fentanyl?

When fentanyl is mixed with other opioids, alcohol, benzodiazepines, or stimulants like cocaine, it increases the risk of accidental overdose.

There is no easy way to know if fentanyl is in a drug. You can't see it, smell it or taste it. Any drug can be cut (mixed) with fentanyl. Even a very small amount can cause overdose.

What are the signs of an overdose?

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

- The person is unresponsive or doesn't wake easily
- They are breathing very slowly or not at all
- Their lips and fingernails turn blue
- Their skin is cold and clammy
- Their body is limp
- They are making snoring or gurgling sounds
- They are throwing up or choking

What can you do if someone is overdosing?

- Call 911
- Administer Naloxone (if available)
- Stay with the person

What is Naloxone?

Naloxone is a drug that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose and allows time for the individual to be taken to a hospital to receive immediate medical treatment to save their life. It is available free of charge in Renfrew County at Renfrew County and District Health Unit, Ontario Addiction Treatment Centre, and participating pharmacies.

An overdose is a medical emergency. Anyone that suspects or witnesses an overdose should call 9-1-1, even if naloxone has been administered.

For more information, you can also visit www.rcdhu.com or call the Renfrew County and District Health Unit Health Info Line at 1-800-267-1097 Ext. 666 to speak with a nurse.

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