

Fentanyl Alert Discussion Sheet for Teachers

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. A student may find themselves in a risky situation where alcohol and drugs may be 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:

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit along with Eastern Ontario Health Unit are alerting local schools and communities that in recent weeks in our region 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 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 fentanyls have been confirmed in a variety of both 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 amount 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 controlled environment. 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.

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 in with other street drugs or being 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 equivalent 1 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.

Fact is: you never really know what you're getting.

Fentanyl is being sold on the street as:

- Faded 80's
- Fake Oxy's
- Greenies
- Green Beans
- 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 that you are not 100% sure what it is or where it has come from.

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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 and alcohol or with 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 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. In other words: if you are having an overdose from fentanyl (or other opioids), Naloxone can save your life. You can get a Naloxone kit to carry with you, when using drugs. Naloxone kits are available free of charge to anyone at risk of opioid overdose as well as their friends and family members. Naloxone kits are available at the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit and some local pharmacies.

www.healthunit.org/harmreduction/fentanyl_response.html

Eastern Ontario Health Unit

1-800-267-7120

www.EOHU.ca

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Health Unit



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