

NEWS RELEASE



313 North Figueroa Street, Room 806 | Los Angeles, CA 90012 | (213) 240-8144 | media@ph.lacounty.gov

For Immediate Release:

September 15, 2022

Health Alert: Counterfeit Pills Contaminated with Fentanyl Causing Drug Overdose

The Los Angeles Department of Public Health is issuing a health alert after four adolescents were found overdosed following purchasing counterfeit narcotic pills at Lexington Park, including one student found deceased on campus at Bernstein High School in Hollywood on September 13, 2022.

Nationwide, there has been a growing trend of illicit drugs (particularly methamphetamine and cocaine) and counterfeit pills contaminated with fentanyl and other life-threatening substances. This has impacted both adults and youth. In 2021, fentanyl was identified in about 77% of adolescent overdose deaths nationally, and over 80% of drug overdose deaths among adolescents aged 15 – 19 in 2015 were unintentional. Fentanyl and methamphetamine-related overdose deaths have increased in Los Angeles County even prior to the pandemic and continue to rise at an alarming rate.

Fentanyl is a high potency synthetic opioid that is colorless and odorless and can cause rapid respiratory depression resulting in accidental death. Awareness of the risk of fentanyl in counterfeit pills, stimulants, and other substances sold outside of pharmacies is necessary for both the general public, including youth and adults, as well as healthcare providers.

Recommended Actions for the Public:

- **Parents and Guardians Should Talk About Drug Use with Adolescents**
- Parents and guardians should use honest language that emphasizes their values and concerns around drug use.
- Open conversations that evoke adolescents' understanding and experiences are more effective than lecturing and utilizing scare tactics.
- Parents and guardians should consider that not all youth immediately show changes in behaviors if they are using substances, so should initiate age-appropriate conversations with their children about substance use.
- If youth use substances, parents and guardians should explore reasons behind substance use. For adolescents who are using substances regularly, a professional assessment may be needed, and information about substance use treatment services is listed below.
- Additional guidance for parents and families is available [here](#) and [here](#).

- **Avoid the Use of Substances from Uncertain Sources**
- **Test Substances for the Presence of Fentanyl using Fentanyl Test Strips Before Using**

Fentanyl Test Strips identify drugs contaminated with fentanyl and can help individuals make informed decisions about the drugs they use. Fentanyl test strips require dissolving a small amount of the drug supply in water, dipping the test strip into the liquid, and waiting 15 seconds for a result.

- **Fentanyl testing strips can be purchased online at:**
 - Team Awareness Combating Overdose (TACO) Inc: <http://www.tacoinc.org/teststrips>
 - Dose Test: <http://dosetest.com/product/fentanyl-test-strip>
 - Dance Safe: <http://dancesafe.org/shop>
- **Fentanyl testing strips can be obtained through AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA):**
 - <http://aplahealth.org/fentanyl> lists locations where to get testing strips.
- **Avoid Using Substances Alone**

If using substances, use with a trusted person who can respond in case of an overdose. Never Use Alone (<http://neverusealone.com>) is an organization offering phone-based support while individuals use a substance and can notify emergency services if the individual stops responding.

- **Obtain Naloxone for Overdose Rescue**
- **Obtain a Naloxone Prescription from Healthcare Provider**

Healthcare providers may prescribe naloxone to patients who are at an increased risk of opioid overdose or who have household members, including children, who are at risk for accidental ingestion or opioid overdose. Ask your primary healthcare provider about being prescribed naloxone if not automatically co-prescribed to you.

- **Pharmacy Naloxone Access**

Pharmacies in California may now provide naloxone without a prescription, although availability is pharmacy and pharmacist dependent. You can find a list of participating pharmacies [here](#).

- **Community-Based Naloxone Distribution Points**

Community members who are unable to access naloxone through their primary healthcare provider or via a local pharmacy, can visit a community-based naloxone access point or a mail-based naloxone distributor. You can find a list of participating naloxone access points [here](#).

- **Obtain Substance Use Disorder Treatment**

Find substance use treatment services and bed availability in Los Angeles using an online, filterable service locator known as the Services and Bed Availability Tool (SBAT), going on www.RecoverLA.org on their mobile devices, or by calling the Substance Abuse Service Helpline (SASH). Services include outpatient and intensive outpatient treatment, residential treatment, withdrawal management, and Opioid Treatment Programs.

- **Services and Bed Availability Tool:** <http://sapccis.ph.lacounty.gov/sbat/>
- Mobile-friendly **RecoverLA** platform: RecoverLA.org
- **Substance Abuse Service Helpline: 844-804-7500**