

SUBSTANCE USE RECOVERY

Counterfeit Pills and Risk of Fentanyl

People rely on medication to manage illness and treat life-threatening diseases. Some people knowingly and unknowingly consume counterfeit (fake) drugs every day, even in countries with good healthcare systems. These fake pills may contain no active parts, wrong ingredients, or have the right ingredients but in an incorrect amount. Fake drugs are made and packaged to look like name-brand medicine. Fake drugs pose a serious possible risk to patients. Some fake medicines have been found to contain mercury, arsenic, rat poison, fentanyl and even cement.

Dangers of Fake Drugs

When you buy medicine from your local pharmacy or get your prescription, you know that the medicine that has been carefully tested and found to be safe and useful for your illness. In addition to the unsafe additives listed above, one of the biggest concerns regarding fake medicine is that many of these pills contain fentanyl. Fentanyl is an extremely powerful opioid – 100 times more powerful than morphine and 50 times more powerful than heroin. It is nearly impossible to tell if drugs have been laced with fentanyl unless you test your drugs with fentanyl test strips.

How to Prevent an Overdose

- Use fentanyl test strips to test pills and other substances for fentanyl. These are found many places locally. Find them at <https://knowmoregenesee.org/know-more-about-harm-reduction/>
- Have naloxone (Narcan) on hand, which is used to reverse an overdose. Contact GHS for training and Narcan kits.
- Use substances more slowly or in smaller amounts, and/or space out doses.
- Have someone check in on your loved one or video chat with them if they consume substances alone.

Warning Signs of Overdoses Containing Fentanyl

- Blue colored lips and fingernails
- Gurgling sounds with breathing
- Seizure-like activity
- Foaming at the mouth
- Confusion or strange behavior
- Low blood pressure
- Drowsiness and/or dizziness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Cold and clammy skin
- Slowed or stopped breathing
- Reduced or loss of consciousness
- Limp body or coma

An opioid overdose requires instant medical care. If you think someone is facing an overdose, even if you aren't sure, it is best to treat it like an overdose. Follow these steps:

- Call 911 immediately
- Administer naloxone, if available
- Try to keep the person awake and breathing
- Lay the person on their side to prevent choking
- Stay with them until emergency workers arrive

Contact GHS for more information or for services. We are here for you. Call us at **810.257.3705** Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. to talk to someone who can help.

