

Fentanyl Fact Sheet for Students

During your teen and young adult years, you may be exposed to alcohol and other drugs. Deciding to use alcohol or other drugs is a personal choice, but like any personal choice, you can make an informed choice. Most teens do not use illicit drugs; the safest choice is not to use.

If you choose to use alcohol or other drugs, inform yourself of the risks and consequences when using these drugs, and learn ways to reduce the risk of harm to yourself and others when using these drugs.

The issue

In recent weeks, there have been several deaths in eastern Ontario from fake prescription medications. Fake prescription medications are made to look like the real prescription opioids. Prescription opioids include medication like morphine, Percocet, Oxycodone, and fentanyl. Getting drugs from a drug dealer, ordered online, or from your friend is very risky and potentially life threatening.

Within our region, illicit fentanyl has 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 fentanyl is known to be deadly in an extremely low amount such as the size of a grain of salt, making the risk of overdosing extremely high.

All opioids, prescription and non-prescription, have a risk of overdose. 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.

Why be concerned about illicit fentanyl?

These drugs have caused hundreds of deaths in Ontario. There are currently 14 known different types of illicit fentanyl. There are multiple concerns about these drugs:

- They are made in underground labs where there is little control over the quality of the drug being made.
- You may not know that you are taking these drugs, as they are being hidden in other drugs like cocaine, crystal meth, heroin, or marijuana. It is also being sold as a different prescription drug like Percocet or oxycontin.
- You can overdose from these drugs.

Illicit fentanyl may be known by the following names:

Faded 80's	Fake Oxy's
Greenies	Green Beans
Green Monsters	Fentanyl Powder

Know and minimize the risks:

1. It's Your Choice!

Most teens, do not use drugs. Only you should be making the choice of what you do or don't put into your body. Never take anything when 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?

- 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!

The only way to avoid an accidental overdose is not to use drugs. If you choose to use, following these tips will help to reduce the risk of an overdose:

- Never use while alone. Make sure someone is close to help you or to provide Naloxone, a life saving antidote, if needed.
- Don't mix a drug with other drugs or alcohol.
- If you are using a new substance, always take a small amount 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. Have a Naloxone kit available and get trained on how to use it.

4. Know the signs of an overdose!

People having an overdose from opioid 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
- Breathing very slowly or not at all
- Lips and fingernails are blue
- Skin is cold and clammy
- Body is limp
- Person may be snoring or gurgling
- Person may be choking or throwing-up
- Pupils are tiny
- A slow heart rate

All signs of an overdose should be treated as a medical emergency.

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

- CALL 9-1-1 if you think someone might be overdosing, make the call, even if Naloxone has been given.
- Get trained on how to give Naloxone and have a Naloxone kit with you.
- Get trained in first aid and CPR.
- Turn person on their side, and put into the recovery position.

What is a Naloxone Kit?

Naloxone is a drug that can temporarily stop a fentanyl or other opioid drug overdose. Naloxone can save your life by allowing you time to get to a hospital to receive medical treatment. Naloxone kits are available free of charge to anyone at risk of an opioid overdose, as well as their friends and family members. If you have a Naloxone kit, you should carry it with you to ensure that it is available in case there is a situation when the use of substances results in an overdose.

Naloxone kits are available at local pharmacies. A full list of pharmacies can be found at www.kflaph.ca/naloxone.

This resource was adapted with permission from Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health 2017.