



Health, Housing & Community Services Department  
Public Health Division  
(510) 981-5300

Janet Berreman, MD, MPH  
Health Officer

## Health Advisory

**November 10, 2015**

### **Warning Regarding Misuse of Medication Labeled "Xanax"**

This Health Advisory is being issued to bring attention to the extreme hazards and risk associated with the misuse of prescription medication. No one should accept or consume any medication that is not prescribed specifically for them.

San Francisco, Contra Costa, and Santa Cruz County Departments of Public Health have all recently issued similar health advisories.

In Santa Cruz County, two individuals died after taking a street version of Xanax. In Contra Costa County, 5 high school students became ill after ingesting a beverage that reportedly contained the prescription drug Xanax, a controlled substance used as a sedative. In San Francisco, 4 individuals reportedly consumed "Xanax" purchased off the street; the product was laced with Fentanyl, a powerful Opioid that can cause severe drug intoxication, leading to death.

At this time, it is uncertain whether there is any association among these events. However, these incidents serve to heighten concern about the misuse of prescription medication, the very real possibility of overdose, and the worry that counterfeit or laced products may be circulating in the Bay Area.

Alprazolam is a benzodiazepine with brand names that include Niravam and Xanax. It is used to treat anxiety disorders, panic disorders and anxiety caused by depression. It appears that there are counterfeit Xanax pills circulating that contain fentanyl. Fentanyl is an extremely potent, short-acting opioid that can cause overdose and death.

Parents, school officials, students and medical professionals are advised to be aware of these risks and to report concerns to local public health and law enforcement as appropriate. Inform your children, your students and your patients NOT to purchase or consume any medication or substance provided from friends, acquaintances or strangers.

#### Resources:

Individuals seeking substance use disorder services may call the Alameda Behavioral Health Care Access Line at 1-800-491-9099.

Providers or the Public can contact the California Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222

**Please distribute to all providers in your practice**