



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

Janet Berreman, MD, MPH
Health Officer

Health Alert
April 13, 2016
Opioid Overdose
Counterfeit Norco Containing Fentanyl

Please distribute to all providers in your practice

Current Situation:

Sacramento County health officials recently reported 48 overdoses of illicitly obtained drugs and at least 10 deaths over a 10-day period. It is suspected that these overdoses and deaths were the result of consumption of an opioid drug that strongly resembles the prescription opioid drug Norco®, but actually contained an undetermined amount of fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opiate analgesic much more potent than morphine. CDPH is receiving anecdotal reports that similar overdoses and/or deaths, potentially involving fentanyl, have occurred in other counties.

While there is currently no established way to track fentanyl related overdoses in California, there is intense interest at both the federal level and locally in gathering this information. To enhance our understanding of the magnitude of severe adverse outcomes due to use of illicitly obtained fentanyl in California, **the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is requesting all healthcare facilities to report all suspected and confirmed fentanyl overdose cases to their local health departments.**

Actions Requested of Clinicians:

- **REPORT suspected and confirmed opioid overdose cases to Berkeley Public Health at 510-981-5300 or after hours 510-981-5911.** The information you submit will be used solely for public health surveillance. The reports should include:
 - Name
 - Date of Birth
 - Age
 - Address of residence
- **REPORT** deaths due to opioid overdoses.
Medical records should be sent via confidential fax to 510-981-5345.
- **CONSIDER** toxicology screening specific for fentanyl in cases of severe overdoses.
- **Warn** patients with a history of substance abuse about the risks of purchasing street drugs at this time. Fentanyl is colorless and odorless and cannot be readily detected without laboratory analysis. Counterfeit Norco pills containing fentanyl are very difficult to distinguish from actual Norco pills. Fentanyl is estimated to be 80 times more potent than morphine and hundreds of times more potent than heroin.
- Be aware that Naloxone is effective in reversing the effects of fentanyl, however, we have received reports that it may take repeated doses of Naloxone over several hours to adequately treat fentanyl overdose, likely due to fentanyl's long half-life.

Resources:

California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
[CDPH Issues Health Alert to Stop Fentanyl-Related Deaths](#)

Please distribute to all providers in your practice