



KENOSHA COUNTY
OPIOID TASK FORCE

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News release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Opioid Task Force warns of presence of fentanyl in illegal drugs, counterfeit prescriptions

A powerful opioid that can cause a deadly overdose with just a small amount is appearing in many illegal drugs and counterfeit prescriptions, members of the Kenosha County Opioid Task Force are cautioning the community.

The Kenosha County Sheriff's Department's Kenosha Drug Operations Group (KDOG) reported to the Opioid Task Force that all types of counterfeit pills have tested positive for the presence of fentanyl in recent months, as has marijuana and cocaine and methamphetamine.

This is of particular danger, task force members warned, because people are left unaware of the potency — and potentially deadly nature — of the substances they are using.

“It’s important to know that, from what we’re seeing in the community, fentanyl is everywhere — in all types of street drugs and illegally obtained prescriptions,” said Kari Foss, chairperson of the Kenosha County Opioid Task Force. “This creates an extremely dangerous situation for users who don’t know what they’re getting.”

Fentanyl factors prominently into the drug-related deaths locally so far this year, said Kenosha County Medical Examiner Patrice Hall.

As of Oct. 1, out of 25 confirmed toxicity deaths, 19 — or 76 percent — involved fentanyl and/or a fentanyl analog, Hall said.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid typically used to treat patients with chronic severe pain or severe pain after a surgery. A Schedule II controlled substance, it is similar to morphine but about 100 times more potent. A deadly dose is small enough to fit on the tip of a pencil.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration issued a public safety alert late in September, warning of an alarming increase in the lethality and availability of fake prescription pills containing fentanyl and methamphetamine.

Counterfeit pills are illegally manufactured by criminal drug networks and are made to look like real prescription opioid medications such as oxycodone (Oxycontin, Percocet), hydrocodone (Vicodin), and alprazolam (Xanax), as well as stimulants like amphetamines (Adderall).

“For those who are using, we want people to know that help is available and recovery is possible,” Hall said.

Vivent Health offers fentanyl test strips, so that users can determine the presence of fentanyl in other substances. For more information, call 262-657-6644.

Kenosha County Public Health offers free training and supplies of Narcan, a medication that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/KCNarcan> or call 262-605-6741.

The Kenosha County Mental Health and Substance Abuse Resource Center may be reached from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday at 262-764-8555.

The Kenosha County crisis hotline operated by Kenosha Human Development Services is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, at 262-657-7188.

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