



Clackamas County Health Advisory: The Dangers of Fake Pills and Fentanyl Poisoning

The Clackamas County Public Health Division and local prevention partners advise parents to be aware of the dangers and increased prevalence of opioids and fentanyl within our community. Teens and youth are specifically being targeted online, as social media platforms are increasingly used to buy and sell drugs, many of which are counterfeit. However, resources and support services are available through Clackamas County, local school districts and community organizations serving those at risk of substance use.

Public Health officials are reporting a sustained increase in overdoses driven largely by fentanyl found in illicit pills and powders. In Clackamas County, opioid overdose hospitalizations increased 18% from 2020 to 2021, and hospitalizations related to fentanyl and other synthetic opioids more than doubled in that time. Oregon now ranks first in prescription opioid misuse and 50th in access to treatment, with 18% of Oregonians needing but not receiving treatment.

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that is similar to morphine but is 50 to 100 times more potent and can make a person stop breathing within minutes. This drug has seen wide use by residents in the tri-county area and across the state—both intentionally through seeking fentanyl out, and through unintentionally through taking a pill that was thought to be a prescription drug like OxyContin or Xanax. For decades, youth have had a natural curiosity to experiment with drugs and alcohol. What has changed drastically is the high risk of overdose due to fentanyl, even if only a portion of a pill is taken, or if it is someone's first time using. Some teens have turned to social media platforms like SnapChat, Instagram and TikTok to buy what they believe are opioid or other prescription drugs; however they are most often fake and contain fentanyl.

There is not a certain type of person who is impacted by overdose from fake pills. It affects everyone. Many factors can drive youth to try substances including self-medicating for anxiety or depression, study aid or improve academic success, stress, boredom, to ease social anxiety and have fun, weight loss, improve sports performance or ease pain, to fall asleep or stay awake.

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As a parent or trusted adult, there are several ways you can help the young people you know stay safe. Parents and adults should talk to youth about the dangers of fake pills and how to stay safe while online. Maintain open communication and remind youth that medications are only safe when taken as prescribed from a doctor or pharmacist, and they should assume any pill not obtained from these sources contains fentanyl. Additionally, Naloxone is available as a lifesaving drug that can reverse the effects of overdoses. Schools and organizations serving people at-risk of overdose can contact Clackamas County to request Naloxone Kits and be connected to additional resources.

TAKE ACTION

- Educate yourself on substance use, overdose, and current overdose trends.
<https://www.clackamas.us/publichealth/opioidsafety>
- Listen without judging, maintain open communication and educate youth on the risks of substance use.
- Remind youth to never mix drugs and alcohol. It can be deadly.
- Be realistic about the risks and benefits of each social media platform and consider limiting the frequency, duration and amount of privacy you provide them with social media.
- Look for changes in behavior, such as irregular eating or sleeping patterns, low energy, general signs of depression or anxiety, unusual irritability, slipping grades, lack of interest in activities they love, and even drastic clothing style changes. Trust your instincts. If you notice a change, ask about it.
- Secure your medications and learn how to safely dispose of any unneeded medicines:
<https://www.clackamas.us/publichealth/opioidsafety#drugdisposalandstorage>
- Naloxone is a live-saving drug that reverses overdose and saves lives. For more information about naloxone and where to get it please visit:
<https://www.clackamas.us/publichealth/opioidsafety>

GET SUPPORT

Alcohol and Drug Support Lines:

- Oregon Youth Line (text or call): 1-877-968-8491
- Lines for Life, Drug and Alcohol Helpline: 800-923-4357
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK

Northwest Family Services, Transitions Program Alcohol and Drug Treatment:

- Email for appointment: transitions@nwfs.org
- Call for appointment: 503-546-6377

Best regards,



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